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LORD NORTH

1732-1792

REGINALD LUCAS





LORD NORTH





Painted by A. Dance.

Engraved by T. Burke

Frederick North, Second Earl of Guilford.

LORD NORTH

SECOND EARL OF GUILFORD, K.G.

1732-1792

BY

REGINALD LUCAS

AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE II. AND HIS MINISTERS,' ETC. ETC.

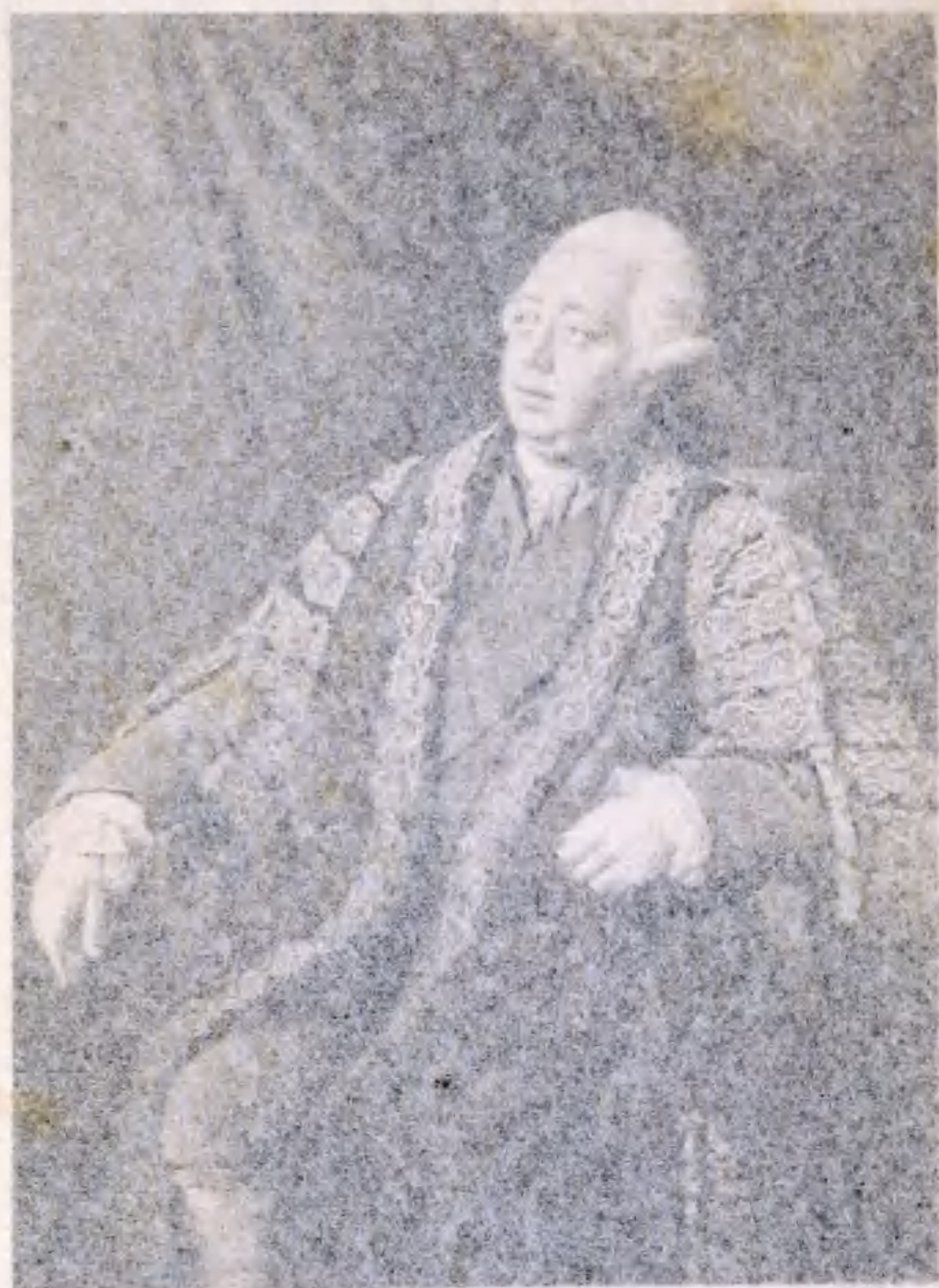
VOL. I

LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

187 PICCADILLY, W

1913



Painted by J. Verelst

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Frederick North Lord of Sandwich

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To

My Friend

SIR JAMES KINGSTON FOWLER

K.C.V.O.

PREFACE

THE publication of many volumes by the Historical MSS. Commission has much diminished the chances of seekers after unpublished papers in private houses. It cannot be pretended that the following pages contain any considerable quantity of new material. I have, however, to thank the Duke of Portland, Lord Dartmouth, and Lord Bathurst for their permission to use some documents not hitherto printed.

For information and assistance in connection with family history, I have to acknowledge gratefully my indebtedness to Lord North, Lady Frances Bushby, and Colonel Dudley North, C.B.; to Colonel Vaughan Lee, M.V.O., and Lt.-Colonel Speke.

Lord North, second Earl of Guilford, has been neglected by biographers in a manner not easy to explain. He was Prime Minister during twelve eventful years, and he was one of the parties to the most notorious of all Coalitions.

It has been said that a biographer must, before

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all things, be in sympathy with his subject. If this means that he must write in a spirit of enthusiasm and unqualified praise, then the neglect, of which I have spoken, can be understood. But one may study a man's career with interest, without ignoring his shortcomings : one may recognise his defects, without any loss of sympathy and liking.

Lord North is not represented here as one of the greatest of men. It was his fate to be confronted with difficulties too great for him to overcome. His share in forming the Coalition did not redeem his previous loss of credit. Yet it is by no means intended to write him down as one of the worthless and incapable ministers who are found in our history. And in his private character there is much to attract, and nothing to repel, the student.

The failure to discover new material is to be regretted : nevertheless it has seemed worth while to collect from familiar sources a record of North's career—to draw him from his undeserved obscurity, and endeavour to construct his figure in right proportions and in an appropriate setting.

I shall be accused—and justly accused—of repetition in the method that I have adopted. Of this I am not ashamed. Readers, who are not

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intimate with the period described, would rather have their memories refreshed as they proceed, than be obliged to turn back frequently to correct them for themselves. Of the two faults, repetition is less to be blamed than obscurity.

I may also be charged with carelessness in the matter of reference. I have, however, deliberately refrained from distracting attention by a profusion of foot-notes. It has been my purpose to quote authority when facts can be disputed: otherwise to give only a general indication of the sources whence I have drawn my information.

The object of this book will be achieved if it be found to supply an answer—not heinously inaccurate and not grievously prolix—to the questions, Who was Lord North, and what did he do?

R. L.

ALBANY,

PICCADILLY,

September 1913.

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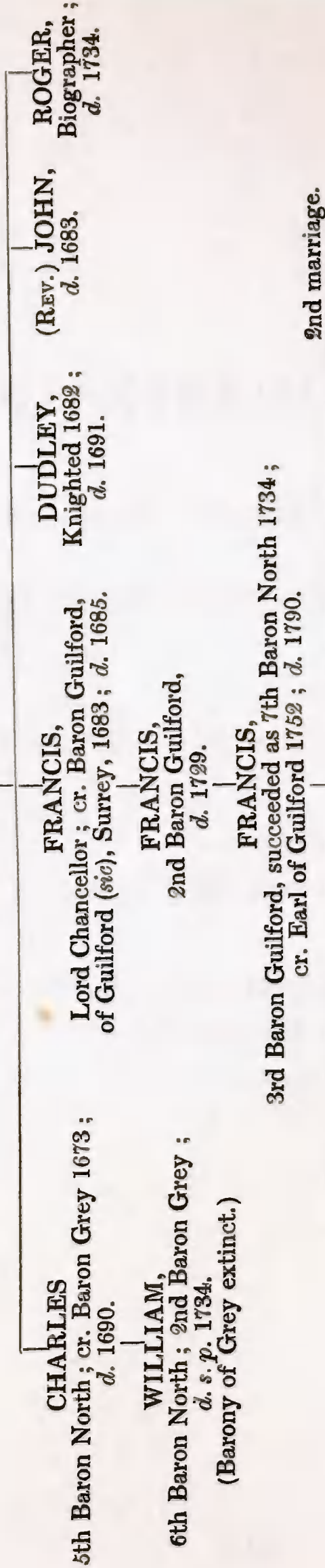
SIR EDWARD NORTH,

M.P. Cambridgeshire; created Baron North of Kirtling, Cambs., 1554; *d.* 1564.

ROGER, 2nd Baron North; *d.* 1600.

(GRANDSON) DUDLEY, 3rd Baron North; *d.* 1666.

DUDLEY, 4th Baron North; *d.* 1677.



1732-1792. 2nd Earl of Guilford; 8th Baron North.

COL. J. S. DOYLE, M.P. = SUSAN,
(assumed name of North).
Baroness North, 1841 (on death of her elder
half-sister, Marchioness of Bute); *d.* 1884.

WILLIAM HENRY JOHN,
11th Baron North; *b.* 1836.

2nd marriage.

(BISHOP) BROWNLOW,
d. 1820.

FREDERICK,
5th Earl;
d. s. p. 1827.

(REV.) FRANCIS,
6th Earl of Guilford; *d.* 1861.

(GRANDSON) DUDLEY FRANCIS,
7th Earl; *d.* 1885.

FREDERICK GEORGE,
8th Earl; *b.* 1876.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

IN order to gain touch with the subject of this biography it may be well to begin with a letter written by Lord North's son-in-law, Lord Glenbervie, to Frederick, the third son of Lord North and fifth Earl of Guilford. The year is not given, but it would be between 1817, when Frederick succeeded, and 1823, when Glenbervie died. Whether the writer abandoned his project because no sufficient help and encouragement were forthcoming, or because death intervened, we cannot tell. Nor is it possible, unfortunately, to discover the 'sheaf or two of tolerable gleanings' which he had already collected.

The letter shows, at all events, the spirit in which the son-in-law proposed to set about his business. The first eight questions may excite the curiosity of very inquisitive people, but the present writer flatters himself that he may be pardoned if he leaves them unanswered. They indicate the

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course of Lord North's early life, but the exact details are scarcely worth examination. The ninth question will be considered in its proper place. Ten, eleven, and twelve are fit matter for an earnest classical student, but not essential to our purpose. The last two paragraphs deserve closer attention.¹

'Argyll Street, 8th Augt.

'My dear Lord Guilford,

'I was much gratified by your approbation and that of your sisters of my resumed intention of collecting some memorials of the life of your excellent father, and I have the satisfaction to know that your brother George² had very much encouraged me in the same design in a conversation we had on the subject soon after your mother's death.³ He was then very clear that it was desirable that some one of the family should undertake such a work. But when I pressed him to do it himself he urged that he had never been accustomed to write anything for publication, and it was understood between us that I should attempt it. All this appears by a memorandum I wrote down at the time, and which I will take an early opportunity of showing you.

'In consequence of this I wrote to several persons, particularly I think Sir Grey Cooper⁴ and Mr. Robinson,⁵ and talked with Lord Bayning,⁶ and I think with Mr. Williams, who was then alive, requesting them particularly to furnish me

¹ For this letter I am indebted to the kindness of Colonel Dudley North, C.B.

² Third Earl, *d.* 1802.

³ In 1797.

⁴ Secretary to the Treasury, 1765-82.

⁵ Secretary to the Treasury, 1770-82.

⁶ First Baron Bayning (1728-1810), grandson of Charles, second Viscount Townshend, Walpole's colleague. He held various offices.

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with any circumstances respecting your father's early life. Of the result I have preserved notes, but it is surprising how scanty and imperfect their recollections, even at that comparatively recent time, had become. And now I find myself in that predicament which Dr. Johnson has so well described, as quoted by Boswell: "If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence; for the incidents which give interest to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition."

'I have, however, already a sheaf or two of tolerable gleanings, and your brother, in the conversation before alluded to, having mentioned that William Adam¹ had made some ample collections on the subject, I wrote to him last year requesting a communication of them, when he promised that he would look over his papers when he got to the country for that purpose. I have not written to him since, but mean to do so in a day or two.

'In the meantime one of my great difficulties is in ascertaining dates and in fixing the occasions on which certain celebrated sayings of your father's took place, together with the chronology and particulars of some of the most memorable circumstances both of his public and private life. I believe you was (*sic*) only sixteen² at the time of his resignation in 1782, but I think your most tenacious memory must have retained many things which I find it extremely difficult to ascertain in any other manner, and I know you will forgive me, considering the piety of the object, in requesting your attention to the following queries.

'1st. Was your father educated at home or at

¹ M.P. Wounded Fox in a duel.

² This is accurate.

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any, and what, preparatory school before his going to Eton?

‘2d. At what age, or in what year, did he go to Eton, and when did he leave it? This probably can be ascertained by the books of Eton School, but as I have no knowledge of the present heads of that school, perhaps you would have the goodness to make the enquiry for me.

‘3. Was Dr. Dampier his private tutor while at Eton?¹

‘4. Is there any means of ascertaining the identity of your father’s compositions in Latin (and perhaps Greek) verse while at Eton, as published in the different collections of such compositions, particularly the last published by one of the Herberts? Your brother George told me that several of those ascribed in that collection to his father were written by him.

‘5. When did he enter Trinity College, and when leave it?

‘6. When did he begin his travels? Did he go first to France and Italy and then to Germany, or the reverse?

‘7. Did Dr. Dampier accompany him in his travels, and also Lord Dartmouth, and were not they both under Dr. Dampier’s tuition or direction?

‘8. Did not your father make some, and what, stay at Leyden, with the view of studying the Law of Nations, and under what professor? I remember circumstances after I knew him that proved to me that he had made considerable progress during his stay in Germany in the language of that country, though he said he had neglected it afterwards.

¹ Thomas Dampier, the elder, was Lower Master of Eton and afterwards Dean of Durham. Thomas, his son, was private tutor at Eton to North’s son, and became Bishop of Rochester and of Ely.—*Dictionary of National Biography*.

EARLY YEARS

I recollect particularly his repeating a great part of a celebrated poem of Haller's called Doris, and which begins "Komm, Doris, komm," &c.

'9. Do you know the particular or assigned cause of Chas. Fox's abrupt quarrel with your father while Fox was still a Lord of the Treasury, I think in the year 1774? You were then only eight years of age, but must I suppose have often heard the subject talked of. I happened to be in the gallery when Fox burst forth in that explosion of bitter invective which astonished all misinformed persons like myself. It used to be ascribed, about that time to Lord North's having refused some application of Fox at the instance of Edmund Burke in favour of his cousin William, then I believe gone to India. Stephen Smith, who you know was your father's servant from the year 1770 to the time of his death, and who was in town the other day, told me that it was a common report at the time that Fox had laid a wager of a thousand guineas at Brooks's that he would make a speech against the minister next night and that, notwithstanding, he would not venture to take his place from him.¹ Fox I think spoke from the side gallery opposite the Treasury bench on that occasion and made use of such personal imputations in his speech that there must have been some strong *ostensible* cause for such sudden hostility. I have always conjectured that the real cause must have been Mr. Fox's sense of transcendent talents and dislike of subaltern situation, while he had probably reason to know that the King had a strong prepossession against him, on account of his dissolute life. This is of course a subject to be handled with delicacy, especially in case of an early publication. The King had on your father's first proposition to

¹ This is not recorded in the betting book.

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make Fox a Lord of the Treasury expressed great reluctance to the appointment, and said that if he were made a member of the Treasury Board he would soon hear the dice-box rattling on the table of the Board Room. I heard at the time that when Fox first made his appearance at a meeting of the Opposition (the place was taken from him, I believe, the morning after the speech I have mentioned) Burke addressed him with the rather hackneyed lines of "Turne! quod optanti," &c.¹

[10, 11, 12 give Latin and French quotations and require source of origin and occasion of use.]

'13. Stephen Smith says that Lord North at an early period of his administration had resigned for the space of a few hours and that it was on the occasion of the bill to shut the port of Boston. That after an interview with the King on the subject of that bill, which Lord North *disapproved* of, he had left the *keys* (I suppose the seal of Chancellor of the Exchequer) behind him in the closet. That when he came home he said to Smith who was attending him, "Smith, I am out." Who replied, "I hope not, my Lord." That nobody knew of this resignation but Smith and your mother. That the King sent the *keys* after him in some hours. That he resumed them and the next day proposed the bill. The fact of this resignation cannot be doubted. The King's powers of persuasion in such cases was strongly exemplified in the catastrophe of Chas. Yorke.

'14. The occasion and circumstances relative

¹ 'Turne, quod optanti Divum promittere nemo
Auderet, volvenda dies, en attulit ultro.'

Æneid, ix. 6, 7.

'Turnus, that which none of the Gods would have dared to promise at your desire, the course of time has brought to you unsolicited' (Globe Edition).

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to your father's decision not to accept (or apply for) the Dukedom of Kent for your grandfather.¹

‘I have just room to subscribe my name.

‘Ever most affectionately yours,

‘GLENBERVIE.’

The *Glenbervie Journals*, edited by Walter Sichel (1910), do not tell us much about Lord North. Glenbervie was a frequent visitor at Bushey, and married Lady Catharine North in 1789. In 1811 he calls to mind one or two stories of his father-in-law; but the editor severely observes :

‘The first of these is coarse without being funny. Of the next, the first is new, the second old, and neither of them very striking.’

It is less important to ‘ascertain the identity of Lord North's compositions in Latin (and perhaps Greek) verse while at Eton,’ than to distinguish with sufficient clearness his own identity. To this end a genealogical table has been presented at the outset. The North family can boast an honourable record of public service. Edward, the first of whom history takes notice, was descended from Roger North, who lived in the reign of Edward IV. Edward became Clerk of the Parliament and afterwards Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, in the reign of Edward VI. He made the mistake of supporting the claim of which Lady Jane Grey was made victim; but he was pardoned

¹ This must have been kept a close family secret, if true. The gossips of the day made no mention of it. George III.'s son was the first royal Duke of Kent.

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and promoted by Mary, and was twice visited by Elizabeth at his home, Kirtling, near Newmarket. He was the first Lord North. Roger, his son, was a favourite at Court, and was twice Ambassador on special missions, to Paris and Vienna respectively. Dudley, his grandson, the third Lord, was a courtier, a musician, an author, and the discoverer of the Springs at Tunbridge Wells.¹ He was a soldier, and served in the Low Countries: he went to Scotland in personal attendance on Charles I. in 1639, but apparently had no stomach for fighting when the Civil War broke out. His successor, Dudley, fourth Lord, was something of a soldier, politician, and a writer on economic and religious subjects. He was created a Knight of the Bath. The fourth Lord's son, Roger, says of him :

‘He was a Christian speculatively orthodox and good; regularly charitable and pious in his family, rigidly just in his dealing, and exquisitely virtuous and sober in his person.’²

His eldest son, Charles, was called to the House of Lords during his father's life by the title of Lord Grey of Rolleston, Stafford. His wife was daughter of Lord Grey of Werke, and widow of Sir Edward Mosley, Bart., of the Hough, Lancashire, great-nephew of Sir Edward Mosley of Rolleston. Charles's son, William, lost his right hand at Blenheim; became a lieutenant-general;

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

² *The Lives of the Rt. Hon. Francis North, Baron Guilford: the Hon Sir Dudley North: and the Hon. and Rev. John North, by the Hon. Roger North.*

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defended the cause of the Pretender in the House of Lords, and was sent to the Tower for complicity in Atterbury's Jacobite plot in 1722. He was, however, released on bail and died abroad, without issue, in 1734. With him the barony of Grey became extinct, and the title of North passed to his cousin, once removed, Francis, father of our Lord North. Charles had a daughter who appears to have been a remarkable lady. Her name was Dudleya. Of her, Roger says :

‘ Having emaciated herself with study, whereby she had made familiar to her, not only the Greek and Latin, but the Oriental languages, under the influence of a sedentary distemper, she died, also without issue.’

The pious memorial composed by Roger has, indeed, made his family immortal. Jowett, Master of Balliol, was wont to place this book with Boswell's ‘Johnson’ and Lockhart's ‘Scott’ as the third great English work of biography. Coleridge was another ardent admirer.¹ Of the three younger brothers whose careers it relates, Francis, the eldest, was Solicitor- and Attorney-General, Chief Justice of Common Pleas, Lord Chancellor (1682), and was created Baron Guilford (1683). He interested himself in art, music, and science. He chose his title in affectionate memory of his friend the Duke of Lauderdale, who had been raised to the English Peerage as Baron Petersham and Earl of Guildford (*sic*: Burke's *Extinct*

¹ *Table Talk*, July 3rd, 1833.

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Peerages) in 1674. The Duke died in 1682 and these titles became extinct. Francis North, with the consent of the widow, became Lord Guilford. Roger North does not explain the change in spelling. The name indeed appears as often in one form as the other during the eighteenth century. He only repudiates the suggestion that his brother wished to appropriate the lady as well as the title. He did, in fact, marry Lady Frances Pope, daughter and heiress of the fourth and last Earl of Downe, and through her the family became possessed of the Wroxton property, where Lord North lives to-day. It need only be recorded of the first Lord Guilford that he laid it down that a glass of wine to sedentary persons was equivalent to exercise.¹ Dudley, the next in order, traded in the East and made a fortune. He became Sheriff of London and a Knight; Commissioner of the Customs and afterwards of the Treasury; and wrote treatises on finance. He purchased the Glemham estate in Suffolk. John was a clergyman, and had the embarrassing honour of preaching before Charles II. at Newmarket. He was Professor of Greek, and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge; Clerk of the Closet and Prebendary of Westminster. Roger, the youngest, was a K.C., Solicitor-General to the Duke of York, and Attorney-General to the Queen after the Duke's accession to the throne. After the Revolution he

¹ North's *Lives*.

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quitted public life in sorrow. He was a copious author. He wrote of music ; attempted a defence of Charles II. ; and succeeded, as we have seen, in celebrating his brothers. He had a creditable belief in his own family :

‘ Yet really, the case is memorable,’ he says, ‘ for the happy circumstance of a flock so numerous and so diffused as this of the last Dudley, Lord North’s was, and not one scabby sheep in it, and considering what temptations and snares have lain in their way, is not of every day’s notice.’

Of Francis, son of Francis, there is little record. His son Francis was first Earl of Guilford, father of our Lord North.

Francis, seventh Baron North, third Baron Guilford, and first Earl of Guilford (1704–1790) does not stand out as a strong or attractive character. He was a friend of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and in 1750 was made Governor to the two eldest of the Prince’s sons. Next year Frederick died, and Lord North was removed ‘ by the influence of the Pelhams.’¹ Presumably the influence at work against him was political ; not of the Court. Horace Walpole wrote that the chief objection to him was that he had ‘ a glimpse of parts.’² When he was made an earl next year, his son wrote to him :

¹ ‘ Lord North ’ : *North American Review*, May 1903, by Lord North. In confirmation of this see Coxe’s *Memoirs of the Pelham Administration*, ii. 167.

² *Letters*, vol. ii. 250.

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‘Leipzig April 23 N.S. 1752.

‘Your advancement, tho’ it consists merely in a title, must be very agreeable to you on many accounts, as it takes off all appearance of your being in an ill-light with the Court, as it is the fruit of merit and not of intrigue, and as the universal esteem and love you have gained will prevent its being either censured or envied.’

Esteem and love were not, as a matter of fact, the universal tribute. When Lord Guilford was appointed Treasurer to Queen Charlotte in 1773 Horace Walpole wrote that it was ‘a nomination that surprised and made everybody laugh. The Earl was extremely infirm and very rich, but very covetous.’ He was not indeed very liberal to his son. In 1777 Robinson¹ wrote to George III. :

‘Lord North’s allowance from Lord Guildford (*sic*) on his marriage was not large, and his estate, including Lady North’s, is not at present considerable . . .

‘Lord Guildford although his estates are 10,000*l.* per annum has not made any further allowance to Lord North except 300*l.* a year to Mr. North, while he was at Oxford . . .

‘Lord North has told Mr. Robinson repeatedly his expenses have every year since he was First Lord of the Treasury very largely exceeded his income.’²

Amongst the Dartmouth Papers there is a letter dated 1736 from George Wright, agent to Lord North, as he then was, telling him that Mrs. Sage

¹ Secretary to the Treasury.

² Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

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had been sent to Madrid and Barcelona to sell jewels :

‘I think Mrs. Sage’s importunity prevailed on your Lordships Generosity rather too much considering ye Legacy and Anny w^{ch} would have contented any reasonable Person.’

We may infer from this that the ‘covetous’ spirit had moved the new lord to sell his North jewels so soon after his succession (1734) and so long before the days of Death Duties ; or that he was capable of acting generously ; or that Mrs. Sage’s name did not misfit her.

This lord married Lady Lucy Montagu, daughter of the Earl of Halifax, in 1728, and their son was our Lord North, born 1732. She died, and he married again in 1736 the widow of Viscount Lewisham, daughter of Sir Arthur Kaye. Of this marriage were born Brownlow North, Bishop of Lichfield, Worcester and Winchester ; and a daughter, who became Lady Willoughby de Broke. After this wife’s death he married a third, the widow of Lewis Watson, second Earl of Rockingham, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Robert Furnese. She brought him according to Horace Walpole ‘5000*l.* or 6000*l.* a year,’¹ and the property of Waldershare in Kent, the home of the present Earl. There were no children by this marriage. All that we know of the lady is derived from one of the feeble sallies of George Selwyn

¹ *Journal of the Reign of King George III.* (‘Last Journals’), ii. 304.

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which gave Walpole such unaccountable pleasure. To George Montagu he writes :

‘Your friend Lord North is wedded. Somebody said it was very hot weather to marry so fat a bride. George Selwyn replied, “Oh, she was kept in ice three days before.”’

Our Lord North was so closely allied until late in life with his step-brother, that it may be well to have the family connection quite clear :

GEORGE LEGGE, 1648–1691.

Created Baron Dartmouth; Admiral Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet (James II.). Accused of conspiring against William III.; sent to the Tower and died there.

WILLIAM, 1672–1750.

Secretary of State, 1710–13; created Viscount Lewisham and Earl of Dartmouth.

VISCOUNT LEWISHAM, *d.* 1732. — ELIZABETH KAYE, *m.* 1736,
Lord North, afterwards 1st
Earl of Guilford.

WILLIAM, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth, 1731–1801.
Lord North’s friend and colleague.

The Earl of Guilford, if he was not lavish of his money, was not sparing of good words towards his second wife’s relations. In the year of their marriage he writes to her father-in-law, Dartmouth, from Wroxton :

‘We shall be cruelly disappointed if we hear you come within three or four and twenty miles of us (for Packington cannot be farther) without being so good as to look upon us’ :

which sounds more appropriate to our days of motor cars than to the heavy travelling ways of

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1736. There is every reason to suppose that he took an affectionate interest in his step-son. Amongst the Dartmouth Papers there is a letter from Lord Guilford upbraiding him for 'his refusal' (January 18th, 1771). North's Government was undergoing reconstruction. Grafton was not in a good humour, and eventually accepted the Privy Seal with the curious reservation that he would not be of the Cabinet because he was not sufficiently in sympathy with their policy. Dartmouth was on intimate terms with Grafton, and his 'refusal' may reasonably be ascribed to a similar hesitation in his support of Lord Guilford's son. On 'Sunday night' the step-father writes again :

'I hope you will impute my warmth to the agony of mind I have felt from the idea of having had reason to take anything unkindly of one I love so tenderly as I do your Lordship. . . . A pretty good night has calmed my spirits.'

Dartmouth became Colonial Secretary next year.

Our Lord North was born in 1732 (April 13th) and was therefore a year younger than his step-brother. They grew up together: they shared their childish ailments. On May 11th, 1740, Lady North writes to her mother, Lady Kaye:

'Lord Lew is in perfect good health and spirits now, but is very full of what they called chicken pox in Master North, he was full of complaints the first days journey but slept and sweat well, and in the morning was full of these things. . . . Wet

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nurse has been taken with a violent bleeding of the nose and frightened Mr. Singleton sadly. . . . Be so good as to let me know how Lady Sharlot Scot does.'

Lady North appears to have suffered a good many domestic annoyances of one kind and another. In an undated letter she writes:

'Holman was drunk when he came before dinner and is quite an idiot, 2 men could hardly get him into the coach when he went away (Mrs. Montagu) desires you may know she has begun the old trade of bread and butter eating. 'Tis our Miss D'Ath that has undone herself, he is a sad creature as well as a beggar. . . . Lady Waldegrave¹ talks of staying here till Parliament meets which is realy (*sic*) terrible. . . . I am Dearest mama's Ever Dutiful Daughter E. NORTH.'

She fears Miss D'Ath will never be able to live 'jently.'

We may assume that our Lord North and his father were always on friendly terms. There is a letter preserved at Wroxton, docketed 'From Papa Dec. 2, 1749,' running thus:

'My Dear, I thank you for your kind wishes to me, but cannot agree with Mr. Wise in thinking the gout a matter of congratulation when it comes to a healthy person, though it may be a great relief to a person labouring under worse distempers. . . . The Christian religion is strangely misapprehended by those to whom it seems a dull thing. To me it

¹ It is not easy to identify this lady. The wife of the first Earl died in 1718. The second Earl did not marry until 1754; and Lady North died in 1745.

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seems to be the only solid foundation for constant cheerfulness.'

When his father was made an Earl, North wrote :

'I believe, my Lord, I may answer for your family that we are not ungrateful for the great care and trouble you give yourself to render us happy and considerable.'

How far the father influenced the son in public life it is not easy to say. We do indeed come upon sentences such as Orde¹ wrote to Shelburne in 1783 :

'Lord Guilford is notoriously liable to his (the King's) influence in a complete degree and Lord North is not less so to Lord Guilford's.'

In spite of this it does not appear to be necessary to keep close watch upon the father in following the son's career.

It has been said that Lord Guilford had been a favoured friend of Frederick, Prince of Wales. To his son and heir the Prince was godfather ; and scandal did not scruple to allege that he was more than that. As the boy grew up, the Prince, out of the innocence of his conscience, no doubt, would crack a clumsy joke with his friend about the curious resemblance to himself that his godson bore. This was an obvious fact ; all contemporary pictures attest it. It is specially conspicuous if we compare King George's portrait by Zoffany with North's by Dance. In old age North, like George

¹ Secretary to the Treasury.

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III., went blind, and this affliction may have added a common cast of expression to the faces as we know them. Wraxall¹ writes that 'people found no difficulty in accounting for the likeness, though perhaps very unjustly.' Gossip must have been unbridled, for one biographer, conscious of rumour and indifferent to detail, misses the point and declares North to have been the son of Lord Guilford and George III.'s mother.

To this supposed consanguinity has been attributed Lord North's loyal and long-suffering endurance of office. As we shall see, he wished to resign; the King urged him to persevere; and North, waiving his longing for release, stuck closer than a brother to his Sovereign. The allegation need not be further examined, nor the consequent theory elaborated now. Frederick was not a libertine; he was a fond, if not a tactful, husband. We are told that he only professed devotion to Lady Archibald Hamilton in order to be in the fashion. Lord Shelburne declared it to be a genuine attachment of long standing.² If so, he confined his spare affections to her, and did not scatter them broadcast. There is no reason whatever to suppose that North's mother, in her short married life, gave any cause for slanderous tales.

Let us dismiss the legend then as the product of an age when people were not too nice in speech

¹ *Historical Memoirs of My Own Time*, by Sir N. W. Wraxall, Bart.

² *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne*, by Lord Fitzmaurice (1912 edition), i. 46.

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or judgment. Nevertheless it would be an excess of delicacy to refrain from recording a sidelight on North's birth and destiny at once familiar and startling.

North was sent to Eton, and appears to have been a studious and exemplary youth. Without tracing his career there as carefully as Lord Glenbervie proposed to do, we may note that one correspondent wrote to Lord Guilford that he was delighted to find the boy

‘not only so good a scholar, but that he has so good a taste and makes so good a judgment upon all the books he reads.’¹

The Lower Master, Dampier, wrote, ‘I am pleased to see in many instances how both the masters and the boys love him, and that he really, by his behaviour, deserves it from both, which is not often the case.’

The publication of Queen Victoria's early journals has brought to light a less flattering story of North's boyhood :

“ ‘When Lord North was at school,’ continued Lord Melbourne, “his tutor told him ‘you're a blundering blockhead, and if you are Prime Minister, it will always be the same’; ‘and it turned out to be so,’ Lord North said.”²

In 1749 it is recorded that North played the part of Syphax in Addison's ‘Cato’ at Leicester House. Bute was now installed in the Prince's favour; theatricals were certainly in his department; and

¹ *North American Review*, *cit.*

² *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, ii. 294.

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probably the two future Prime Ministers met first upon the stage. In the same year North went to Trinity College, Oxford, where his tutor speaks of his 'uniform attention to the minuter points of duty,' and congratulates him on the fact that 'you have, by God's blessing, been made sensible of the importance of religion before your entrance upon public life.'

North was not a famous scholar; but he could hold his own in an age when educated gentlemen were expected to have read and to remember their classics. He received a considerable tribute from Horace Walpole, who wrote in 1750, 'I hear of nothing but the parts and merits of Lord North.'¹ He took his degree, and went abroad with his step-brother Dartmouth. From North comes a letter dated Leipzig, July 28th, 1751, to Dr. Huddesford, of Trinity, Oxford, afterwards Fellow and Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum: 'our greatest distress has been for want of good butter.' They have dined with the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel:

'At the Hague we kissed the hand of our Princess Royal, and saw the young lady whom the gazettes have already disposed of to the Prince of Wales. She is but eight years old and is one of the largest children I ever saw in my life. I fancy the Prince of Wales will hardly stay for her.'²

Queen Charlotte was born in 1744, and would then have been seven. George III. was thirteen. George II. was still alive, and there is no evidence

¹ *Letters*, ii. 405. ² Patshull House Papers; unpublished.

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to show that when his grandson married ten years later he was carrying out the intentions of the late king.

Next year North writes from Vienna, August 30th, to the Duke of Newcastle :

‘As our business here is to take our pleasure, what we do cannot be of any great importance. I pass indeed an hour every morning with my Italian master. O, my Lord, how dull a business it is . . . to a young man who has been seven years at a public school and almost three years at Universities to be obliged to thumb over again the right parts of speech . . . My respects to Hardenberg and Dr. Johnson.’

And from Milan, October 25th, after describing the scenery :

‘Our stay in this town has been short and sweet. The nobility here is very numerous. They seem idle, and their time entirely taken up with diversions. The Governors gave a magnificent supper and ball. . . . We were present and much entertained. . . . Your most obedient humble servant and cousin, NORTH.’¹

His father had been made an Earl in April and he had become Lord North. From Rome he writes, February 18th, 1753, of the ‘inexhaustible fund of entertainment.’ He says the Italians are less hospitable than the Germans, except the Milanese, ‘who are the most hospitable nation on the face of the earth.’ He expects to be in Paris next winter and in England in the spring of 1754. ‘My brother (de voyage) joins with me.’

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 32730.

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A tutor went with them on this journey, and amongst his reports he tells the father that ‘ Mr. North, by the ingenuity of his manners add’d to the comeliness of his person gained himself an universal admiration.’¹ Subsequent accounts of his personal appearance will be found difficult to reconcile with this flattering description ; but corpulence had not yet seized upon him, and we find Horace Walpole writing, April 30th, 1754, ‘ I was last night at a little ball at Lady Anne Furnese’s for the new Lords, Dartmouth and North.’ He was of course an object of interest to the mothers in Society, and was prepared to acquit himself of the obligations of his position. Perhaps the most just appreciation of him at this time of life is to be found in the letter which his daughter, Lady Charlotte Lindsay, wrote for Lord Brougham’s *Historical Sketches*. She says :

‘ He spoke French with great fluency and correctness : this acquirement, together with the observations he had made upon the men and manners of the countries he had visited, gave him what Madame de Staël called l’esprit Européen, and enabled him to be as agreeable a man in Paris, Naples, and Vienna as he was in London. Among the lighter accomplishments he acquired upon the Continent was that of dancing : I have been told that he danced the most graceful minuet of any young man of his day : but this, I must own, surprised me, who remember him only with a corpulent heavy figure, the movements of which

¹ Patshull House Papers.

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were rendered more awkward and were impeded by his extreme nearsightedness before he became totally blind. In his youth, however, his figure was slight and slim ; his face was always plain, but agreeable, owing to its habitual expression of cheerfulness and good humour ; though it gave no indication of the brightness of his understanding.'

North was twenty-two years of age, and other duties lay before him. His father put him into Parliament at once, and he represented his home borough of Banbury from 1754 to 1790, when he succeeded to the peerage. With how much aspiration or hesitation he accepted the position we cannot tell. If we read his character aright, there would be no impatient ardour. He was undoubtedly humble-minded, with a moderate estimate of his own abilities ; nevertheless we may discount something for the customary formality of correspondence when we find him writing to his father in 1752 :

' You have too good an opinion of me when you imagine me capable of adding a lustre to the dignity you have acquired. I am so far from thinking myself capable of adding a new lustre to it (the Earldom) that I have the greatest apprehension lest I should tarnish and diminish that which it has already.'

However, his lot was cast and he entered forthwith upon a career which was to bring him into far greater prominence than the station occupied by his father. It was not, indeed, by the name of Guilford that he is remembered ; and how far he

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added lustre to the family record remains to be seen. Some there are who have not hesitated to confirm the apprehensions confessed in the last paragraph of his letter: but for thirty-eight years he was in public life, and during twelve of these he was to enjoy the perilous glory of the actor on whom the issue of success or failure principally depends.

CHAPTER II

PARLIAMENT AND OFFICE

NORTH entered Parliament in 1754. That year Pelham died and his elder brother, Newcastle, became Prime Minister. This insatiable politician had at length reached the height of his ambition. Pitt had not yet collected strength for his great flight, and in 1755 Newcastle, the despised, was able to turn him out of his place (Paymaster of the Forces) for insubordination. Then Newcastle fell. The Duke of Devonshire came into office, and Pitt into power. George II. resisted and dismissed the Secretary; but the tide had turned. Newcastle tried to form a Government without Pitt, and failed. The King was obliged to yield; and into the succeeding months were crowded the achievements on which must be based Chatham's true title to glorious memory. Now it was that he made his mighty boast, 'I know that I can save this country and that nobody else can'; and he sharpened the weapons of the nation to such good purpose that his name became a terror and reproach in the ears of every Frenchman.

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Such application as North was disposed to bestow upon politics was diverted, for the moment, to the more blessed enterprise of matrimony. In 1756 he married Anne, daughter and heiress of George Speke of White Lackington and Dillington, Somersetshire. Horace Walpole wrote of him that he had 'married a very great fortune.' This, we shall see, was an exaggeration: but it might have been true. It will be remembered that a rich and crazy gentleman, with a grievance, died and left his property, Burton Pynsent, to Pitt (1765) because in him he saw a politician after his own heart and, as he thought, one who had suffered persecutions like his own. Anne Speke has been described as 'next heiress' to Sir William Pynsent.¹ According to Horace Walpole she was 'nearly related to Lady Pynsent' and considered herself Sir William's heiress, but

'the uncomeliness of Lady North and a vote my lord gave against the cider bill offended the old gentleman so much that he burnt his heir in effigy.'²

Whatever her expectations may have been, she was disappointed: but Pitt was not allowed to inherit his estate without a challenge. It is on record that the presumptive heirs disputed the will: but they failed to upset it,³ and North had to be content with the smaller fortune that his bride originally brought with her.

¹ Von Ruville: *Life of Chatham*, iii. 112. ² *Letters*, iv. 313.

³ *Chatham Correspondence*, ii. 420.

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Lady North was no beauty. Hence a legend, variously applied. It is said that one night at the opera somebody asked, 'Who is that plain-looking lady in the box opposite?' 'That,' said North, 'is my wife.'

'I did not mean her,' came the obvious rejoinder: 'I meant the lady next to her.'

'That, Sir, is my daughter; and I may tell you that we are considered to be three of the ugliest people in London.' This peculiarity appears to have been the badge of all the tribe. Lord Broughton, in 1812, records:

'Heber told me a capital jest of Frederick North at Algiers. North asked the Dey permission to see his women. After some parley, the Dey said, "He is so ugly, let him see them all."' ¹

Lady North made no mark in public, but in domestic life she was admirable. Her daughter, Lady Charlotte Lindsay, declared that she was blessed with good sense and singular mildness and placidity of temper: she was shy and indolent:

'there never was a more happy union than theirs during the thirty-six years that it lasted. I never saw an unkind look or heard an unkind word pass between them.' ²

It will be shown presently that North was unquestionably a Tory in an age when there was no rigid dividing line between the two parties.

¹ *Recollections of a Long Life*. Frederick was third son, afterwards fifth Earl.

² Lord Brougham's *Historical Sketches*, ii. Appendix.

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Lord Rosebery, in his *Chatham*, has quoted the observation of Sir Leslie Stephen on the mid-century European conflicts :

‘that complicated series of wars which lasted some ten years, and passes all power of the ordinary human intellect to understand or remember.’

In the period that lies before us we shall not be puzzled by any international alliances as shifting and perplexing as the kaleidoscope ; but we shall have to follow a merging and severing of political connections at home which defy analysis on any principle of party allegiance. It may be crudely stated that throughout the reigns of the first two Georges, and the early years of George III., power was tossed to and fro amongst the rival sections of the Whig party : no matter which faction was predominant, the remainder were willing and eager to take their share. Bute and North were Tories ; even if their colleagues were to a large extent Whigs.

It will be remembered that North’s father had been appointed Governor to the sons of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and had been removed ‘by the influence of the Pelhams.’ Notwithstanding this, North found in Newcastle his first political chief ; and, beyond that, a helpful and affectionate friend. Newcastle had resigned in 1756. Devonshire held office, with Pitt in command, until April 1757. Then the King dismissed Pitt ; the Government

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collapsed, and, after a long interval of confusion, Newcastle reappeared as Prime Minister, happy with the shadow of power whilst Pitt held the substance.

In December of this year, 1757, North was chosen to second the Address in reply to the King's Speech, and set out upon his Parliamentary journey auspiciously enough. 'Never did a maiden effort give more satisfaction, and the applause was universal,' wrote Lord Jersey. An old member reported that there was 'no awkwardness in his person, his language fine and correct . . . he had that day raised to himself a great repute.' 'A most masterly performance it was indeed,' said the Secretary to the Treasury.¹

Office was clearly to be his portion, and on May 24th, 1759, the Duke of Newcastle wrote to Pitt:

'I this day recommended my Lord North to the King to succeed my Lord Bessborough in the Treasury. He is a near relation of mine, but I hope his appearance in Parliament will make the choice approved, and that he will be in time a very useful and able servant of the crown.'

It is a curious fact, and one worthy of record, that no enquiries of the families concerned, and no research in the College of Arms, have served to establish any affinity in blood or by marriage between Newcastle and North.

Of Newcastle and Pitt the present writer has

¹ *North American Review, cit.*

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given the best account in his power elsewhere:¹ there is no need to attempt a further description now; but we shall hear a good deal more of Lord Chatham in the course of the American War. At present he and North were to be on excellent terms.

In 1761 Walpole wrote to George Montagu: 'Your Lord North is talked of for succeeding Halifax at the Board of Trade'; but this was one of his bad shots, and North remained a Lord of the Treasury until 1765.

He had clearly not disappointed his Chief, who wrote to him on January 7th, 1762:

'My dear Lord, I will certainly do my utmost to procure the pension Lord Guildford (*sic*) and you desire for Mr. Miller's widow and I hope I shall succeed. I have a favour to beg of you which I hope you will not refuse me. Mr. Grenville² desired yesterday that I would write to your Lordship to move the address to the King in answer to His Majesty's Speech acquainting the Parliament with the declaration of war against Spain.'³

To this North replied on January 10th:

'I esteem myself much honoured by your Grace's commands and will obey them with great pleasure. There is no point of politics in the world in which I have so determined an opinion as aversion to a war with Spain, but as I think I

¹ *George II. and his Ministers*, by the author.

² Grenville was Treasurer of the Navy, and leader of the House of Commons.

³ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 32933.

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have reason to imagine that your Grace and the rest of his Majesty's servants are nearly in the same sentiments¹ . . . I shall have no sort of objection . . . to say what little I can to persuade the House to come into the measure.'²

In an undated letter, presumably written after Newcastle's resignation, he says :

'My Lord, It is a great addition to all the former obligations for which I shall in all places and at all times own myself indebted to your Grace that you are so good as to take so much notice of the little matter I said in the House on Tuesday, which I owed to Truth and Justice as well as Gratitude. Your Grace's abilities and integrity in the execution of the offices you held are allowed by every unprejudiced man in this kingdom, and I was very happy in finding an opportunity of declaring how much my opinion in that respect coincided with that of the public. I beg leave to assure your Grace that though we may sometimes differ upon questions of political expediency, I shall never fail in everything that relates personally to you to show the sense I have of the many great favours I have received at your hands.'³

In 1763 North was put up on behalf of the Government to move against Wilkes. Here his Toryism was turned to account. He was on principle ready to support any act of discipline and resist any appearance of concession. He opposed the repeal of the Cider Tax, and the reduction of the Land Tax, as he supported the Stamp Act and

¹ Pitt had resigned in the previous year because the Government refused to declare war against Spain.

² Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. *cit.* ³ *Ibid.* 32947.

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opposed its repeal ; for ‘ I saw the danger of repeal.’ So now he was ready to accept a brief for Government against Wilkes.

‘ In all my memory,’ he said, years afterwards, ‘ I do not remember a single popular measure I ever voted for : no, not even the Nullum Tempus Bill, nor the declaration of law in the case of general warrants.’ And he added, ‘ I state this to prove that I am not an ambitious man. Men may be popular without being ambitious, but there is rarely an ambitious man who does not try to be popular.’

It is remarkable that in spite of these confessions he should have written to his father on November 8th :

‘ Nothing can go more against me than the business I am now upon, but . . . it is impossible to avoid it. . . . I begin heartily to wish I had followed my own opinion in going out with the Duke of N. . . . one cannot in honour decline taking a part in a thousand affairs wherein one would choose to be quiet.’¹

In the previous year, 1762, Newcastle had found himself so persistently snubbed and ignored that he could no longer refrain from making way for Bute, who was essentially a Palace Premier. North had no objection to that. If he had to take a part, he had no doubt about his choice of sides ; but we shall not go far astray if we set out with the understanding that throughout his stormy career he would at all times have preferred being left in

¹ *North American Review*, cit.

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peace, and not called upon for firm decisions and strong action. He was blessed or afflicted with the infinite capacity for sleep which is supposed to be an hereditary attribute of the House of Cavendish. He was usually asleep on the Treasury Bench. Burke was once driven to interrupt his own speech with an exclamation of hope that the Government was not dead but asleep, like Lazarus. Another member, demanding North's impeachment and execution, protested against the minister's slumber. North asked why he should be denied the solace allowed to every criminal on the eve of execution : adding, as an afterthought, that the speaker who had sent him to sleep had least right to complain. He generally slept, indeed, with his ears open, if his eyes were shut. Once he caught out Burke uttering a false quantity in a quotation : he muttered a correction and slept again. ' Even now,' cried a speaker, ' when voices of warning and protestation are raised against him, the noble lord is asleep.' North was heard to murmur : ' I wish to God I was.' No wonder his corpulency grew apace. He does not appear to have been a glutton, nor a hard drinker in a drinking generation ; but in somnolence, at all events, he rivalled the fat boy in *Pickwick*. He did not rush into action, then, against Wilkes ; he found the business unpleasant, but it was part of his duty and it had to be discharged.

Meanwhile Bute had carried the Peace of Paris, 1763, with the aid of Henry Fox, who undertook

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the leadership of the House of Commons, as an expert in jobbery and bribery, to educate the Party. Then Bute resigned, and George Grenville became Prime Minister. The King was inclined to like Grenville.¹ Although a Whig in name, his was really a Tory Government, says Mr. Lecky. Grenville was sound on the Stamp Act, Wilkes, and the punishment of officers if they voted amiss in Parliament. Moreover he saved the King from Pitt, whom he hated. Bedford had advised the King to send for Pitt. Overtures were made; Pitt stipulated for the exclusion of Bedford and his friends. The King, seizing the opportunity of making mischief, reported this at once to Bedford, who immediately carried his forces over to Grenville.² But the King soon found he had exchanged King Stork for King Log. Grenville bored him with his lectures until he declared he would rather see the devil enter his closet, than his minister, who presently waxed wanton and demanded a pledge that his Sovereign should have no further communication with Bute and should turn Bute's brother out of his office of Privy Seal of Scotland.

Pitt could be no worse than this, and the King was very soon in private communication with him; to the great and just indignation of Grenville.

¹ Shelburne said that George III. always bore a grudge against Grenville for having paid court to the Prince of Wales's friend Lady Archibald Hamilton to the detriment of his lawful wife.—Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 47.

² Lecky: *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*.

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Pitt stipulated for condemnation of the Stamp Act and general warrants, which was a hard saying in the ears of King George. Little was to be hoped of such negotiations, and nothing came of them. In 1765 the Duke of Cumberland was deputed to try his hand; but he fared no better than his nephew. Temple, now, was on the side of his brother and the Stamp Act; and without Temple Pitt was not prepared to act.

Then the King cast despairing eyes toward divers other Whigs, and he found salvation for the moment in Rockingham. Grenville was elbowed out, and the new Administration was formed in July 1765. Rockingham visited Pitt, and tried all the means in his power to enlist him, without success; a refusal for which Pitt has been much blamed. He was in general sympathy with Rockingham's policy, and he raised no objection to his own political friends accepting office; but for himself he was obdurate. No doubt he had secret motives and reasons; but he was, in fact, sulking. Three or four years before, Voltaire could write of '*Les Anglais, vainqueurs dans les quatre parties du monde*'—and this had been Pitt's doing. Now the glory was departed, he thought, and he was not inclined to make his further services cheap.

In the new Government North found no place. It is doubtful whether he wished to retire; Mr. Lecky says he was dismissed. The King declared years afterwards that some time later Lord North submitted to him that the Rockingham party was

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too foolish to go on with, and recommended a change; that he had replied that in such case there would be nothing left but North himself and Egmont; and unless they would undertake to form a government he must fall back on Pitt.¹

It is not suggested that North regarded this as a serious invitation, or was disposed to attempt such a commission. Nor is it probable that he was very eager for office. He evidently held Rockingham in poor esteem; the Government were occupied in reversing the policy of their predecessors, amongst whom North had been numbered, and in passing measures against which his life was to remain a consistent protest. He was rightly situated in Opposition: he foresaw that there must be another breakdown soon, and he could well afford to bide his time with Pitt. Nevertheless, when he was invited to come in towards the close of the administration, he did not refuse without demur. On May 22nd, 1766, Northington, Lord Chancellor, wrote to Rockingham of 'the satisfaction I receive in the accession of Lord North.' Walpole says:

'He goggled his eyes and groped in his money pocket, more than half consented; nay so much more, that when he got home he wrote an excuse to Lord Rockingham which made it plain that he thought he had accepted.'

The letter, which was dated May 24th, 1766, ran as follows:

¹ Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 258.

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‘My Lord . . . I am much obliged to your Lordship and Mr. Conway . . . and can never be an ill wisher to an administration from which I have received such marks of kindness. But not to enter at large into my motives, I shall rest more satisfied, if I continue as I am, than if I accept the office you have been so good as to propose to me. I beg pardon for all my difficulties which must have embarrassed you and my other friends, and particularly for this last change of opinion. I shall be always constant in regard to your Lordship and grateful remembrance of your kind intentions.’¹

On June 10th, 1766, Lord George Sackville wrote to General Irwin:

‘Lord North was offered the third Vice-Treasurership of Ireland and, as I am told, had twice accepted. But it ended in his refusing it.’²

Meanwhile, Pitt had been assailed with applications flattering and frequent enough to satisfy even his vanity. In January 1766, Shelburne was sent to Bath to ascertain the minimum of his demands, with a tolerably free hand to treat. Pitt refused to communicate his views, and afterwards declared that he had not been consulted.³ Then he was solemnly summoned in the name of the King; and to London he came, apparently for the express purpose of giving himself the pleasure of refusing compliance.

¹ *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham*, Earl of Albemarle, i. 345.

² Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

³ The King told Ashburton this in 1783. Fitzmaurice's *Shelburne*, i. 258.

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However, his hour was at hand. In July, Rockingham's administration expired, and Pitt came in on his own terms, with Grafton as the official head at the Treasury.

North was at once invited to join, and on July 28th, Pitt wrote him a letter, unfolding his plans extensively. It is evidence that North had gained a sure footing in public life that the King should have consulted him in a crisis, and that Pitt should have approached him with such marked civility.

On the other hand it is to be observed that none of North's speeches find any mention in the *Parliamentary History*. Of the important occasions mentioned in these letters, we read only that 'Lord North moved.' Not until 1769, after he had been in Parliament for fifteen years; in office long; and Chancellor of the Exchequer for more than twelve months, do the reporters of the day treat him as one worthy of their attention.

CHAPTER III

THE GRAFTON ADMINISTRATION

POSSIBLY Pitt used so much urbanity in addressing North in order to remove any soreness that might have been caused by the diversion into his own hands of the Burton Pynsent property.¹ He writes as the avowed head of the new Administration, and names, amongst other appointments, that of the Duke of Grafton to the Treasury. The office assigned to North was, after all, only Joint Paymaster-General, but, says Pitt :

‘ Should your lordship (fortunately for the King’s service) think it agreeable to you to be one of them, I should esteem myself happier in having writ this letter than in most where I have had the King’s commands to employ my pen. Allow me, my lord, to end where I ought to have begun with an apology for an intrusion on your retreat. My best and only one . . . is a sincere desire to approve myself zealous for the strengthening of His Majesty’s Government by inviting to it abilities and dignities, as well as to preserve to myself the valuable privilege I have held from ancient days of being the sincere humble servant and well-wisher of Lord North.’

¹ The decision in his favour had been given on June 27th, Pitt’s letter is dated July 28th, 1766.

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There may be meaning in the apology for intruding on North's retreat; possibly his love of repose was notorious. However, the ambitious spirit prevailed for the moment and he reported this offer to his father with the comment that it was 'very honourable, profitable, and agreeable, and I see no reason on earth why I should refuse it.' His only reluctance was due to the fact that Dartmouth,

'finding the Plantations were to continue united to the Southern Department, . . . resigned yesterday morning. Nothing can be more vexatious than to find myself constantly, by the strange political jumbles, opposed to one of the men in the world that I honour, love, and esteem the most.'¹

Dartmouth, it must be observed, had been President of the Board of Trade and Foreign Plantations under Rockingham, and had been a consenting party to the repeal of the Stamp Act. Wraxall dismisses him as 'unworthy of attention or notice,' but it must also be observed that he had risen faster and higher in official life than his step-brother, and that he had a considerable part to play in the future. He was to be Colonial Secretary under North, 1772-75. From first to last he never wavered in his desire to follow a conciliatory policy towards America. In 1774 he assured Shelburne of his 'determination to cover America from the present storm to the utmost of his power, even to

¹ *North American Review*, *cit.* Shelburne had resigned this office in 1763, dissatisfied with his subordination to the Secretary of State.

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repealing the Act' (closing the Port of Boston).¹ So obviously sincere was his wish to come to terms with the Colonists instead of blows, that he has the rare fortune to be held in pious memory to this day in a land where few of his colleagues are named without reproach. Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire, may be regarded as his shrine. North, then, was in office again, and Dartmouth was out ; but North had to be content for the moment with his inferior rank, although Chatham was writing sententiously to Lord Guilford that

'the return of Lord North into the King's service must be considered by me as a very material acquisition which His Majesty's Government makes.'

In December North was sworn of the Privy Council.

The office of Paymaster is always tainted with an atmosphere of suspicion. Henry Fox made his long tenure of it scandalous ; its temptations and opportunities damaged his reputation for all time. Of some Paymasters it is usual to record as singular evidence of their integrity that they left office with clean hands and empty purses. In North's worst hours he was never charged with sordid conduct in the year of his Paymastership.

We may pause now to enquire how the past dozen years had dealt with North in person and repute. He had not grown in beauty :

'See that great, heavy, booby-looking seeming

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

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changeling,' said Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'you may believe me when I assure you as a fact, that if anything should happen to me, he will succeed to my place, and very shortly after come to be First Commissioner of the Treasury':

a rare instance of a political prophecy to be fulfilled completely.

'Here comes blubberly North; I wonder what he is getting by heart, for I am sure it can be nothing of his own,' said some one in Grenville's presence; to which came the reply, 'You are mistaken. North is a man of great promise and high qualifications, and if he does not relax in his political pursuits is very likely to become Prime Minister.'

He was growing fat. A little later he had a sharp attack of illness and lost weight. His doctor asked him what he felt: 'What I have not felt for a long time,' said North, 'my own ribs.'

Wraxall says he was like the portraits of Leo X., and a caricature of George III. His tongue was too large for his mouth; his speech thick, but not indistinct. He was clumsy too, he says, and all the more so in proportion to his growing weakness of eyesight. One night in Parliament he caught Welbore Ellis's wig on the point of his sword and walked out of the House without perceiving what he was carrying with him. His good nature and homely humour were his best assets, and served him through many an anxious ordeal. An angry opponent once railed at him as 'that thing, a Minister':

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‘Well, to be sure,’ said North, patting his ample sides: ‘I am an unwieldy thing: the hon. member, therefore, when he called me a thing said what was true and I cannot be angry with him. But when he added that thing, a Minister, he called me that thing of all things he himself wished most to be, and therefore I took it as a compliment.’

He was undoubtedly lacking in those graces that Chesterfield had recommended so urgently to his unlucky son:

‘The noble lord who spoke last,’ said Burke, ‘after extending his right leg a full yard before his left, rolling his flaming eyes and moving his ponderous frame, has at length opened his mouth.’

Nor was Burke the only person who failed to admire his manner. Shelburne says that he was taken to the House of Commons as a boy: he heard North speak once and would not wait for more:

‘I shall never forget the scolding (my father) gave me. He inferred from it that I never could be anybody. Lord North was then rising into reputation as a speaker.’

North was evidently a House of Commons man by nature. In spite of a strong element of laziness, and an entire absence of that fierce determination which carries men of moderate ability to the front, he liked to be in the movement: we perceive this in his letter to his father already quoted. He was not hungering for glory; not even thirsting for promotion; but he liked to take his snooze on the Treasury bench. His Parlia-

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mentary instinct is further made manifest by the fact that he was always known to be a good debater; which is wholly different from being a good speaker. Lord Brougham says of him:

‘Few men in any station have, indeed, left behind them a higher reputation as a debater and, above all, as the representative of the government.’

Charles Fox told Samuel Rogers that he was ‘a consummate debater.’ Gibbon wrote of him as

‘a statesman of spotless integrity, a consummate master of debate, who could wield with equal dexterity the arms of reason and ridicule.’

His extraordinary indulgence in sleep did not make him slow-witted or unready.

It cannot be claimed for him that he had Parliamentary courage in perfection. This again is a separate and most rare virtue, possessed, so Mr. Gladstone said, by only three men within his own experience—Peel, Russell, and Disraeli.¹ We have already discerned in North’s character a tendency to hesitate and to shrink from resolute action. Burke once condemned him in an epigram: ‘The debater obtained credit, but the statesman was disgraced for ever.’ Let it, however, be said at once that his was to be no record of systematic flinching and surrender. This we must never forget, that between the years 1770 and 1782, whilst he was at the head of the Government, the balance of Parliamentary ability

¹ Morley’s *Life*, i. 188.

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was very heavy in favour of the Opposition, and that, irresolute and reluctant as he may have been, North managed to maintain a running fight that did credit to his tenacity and manliness no less than to his political adroitness.

Moreover he had the valuable knack of turning the laugh against an opponent. Garrick in verse joined him with Fox, Burke, and the rest of the most admired :

‘ When Barré stern, with accents deep,
Calls up Lord North and murders sleep,
And if his Lordship rise to speak
Then wit and argument awake.’

He was ready to crack a joke even at Burke's expense. One day Wedderburn had used an argument to prove that nothing but an Act of Parliament had force ; Burke pounced upon this, and declared that by the same process of reasoning a resolution was nothing : an address was nothing. North, in defence of Wedderburn, declared that he was prepared to go further, and maintain that the long and witty speech to which they had just listened was—nothing.

It was a useful habit and often saved him trouble. When, for instance, an opponent in the course of his attack reiterated the phrase ‘ Mr. Speaker, I flatter myself . . . ’ North dismissed him with the comment that a politician who had spent his life in flattering others must be pardoned if he occasionally did the same thing to himself.

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He could, however, do better than that. Wraxall tells a curious story of a later date. North had to make a speech of great importance to establish the Coalition of 1782, and his eyelids were heavy as ever. He begged Wraxall to sit by him in the gallery whilst he slept. This Wraxall did, taking notes. When the proper moment arrived, he gave the call to action, and North, seizing the situation in a few moments, went down and made a vigorous fighting speech.¹

No wonder that such a man was counted as worthy to be enlisted in the official band. We must wait until he becomes head of the Government before his qualities and defects are more perfectly considered; but this much may be said to account for Pitt's desire to employ him.

The year 1766 was a period of calm between storms. Wilkes was languishing abroad, with occasional futile descents upon ministers at home. He was to raise a tempest in full blast in due season; and of this it will be better to follow the course in a separate chapter.

The American story must certainly be told apart, so that the sequence of events may be clearly traced. Here it is to be noted that Rockingham in 1766 had repealed the Stamp Act, passed by Grenville in 1765, and the cloud beyond the Atlantic had passed out of the sky. The air indeed was not perfectly clear. It had been

¹ It must be remembered that the accuracy of Wraxall has been much disputed: but his evidence is by no means to be ignored.

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charged with storm, and the weather-wise might have predicted a return of dirty weather. For instance, there had been a question of compensation for injuries inflicted during the Stamp Act riots. Government had been content to 'recommend' it. Bernard, Governor of Massachusetts, thought proper to 'require' it. In the existing temper of the people, this alone might have rekindled their rage. It was one of Shelburne's first acts, upon taking up the Secretaryship of State under Grafton,¹ to send a soothing dispatch in order to effect an accommodation.

Meanwhile, there was much distress and disturbance at home: bread was dear, and there was rioting in many places. We find the King writing to Conway, as Secretary of State, to express his indignation at hearing that the 15th Regiment of Dragoons have taken to robbing on the highway; he is 'firmly of opinion that, when brought to conviction, the law must take its course; for soldiers have a maintenance and therefore have no plea of distress.'²

In addition to domestic trouble there was a scare of French invasion: French officers in disguise were detected in the act of choosing favourable spots for the landing of troops. There had been a discovery of reports by a French officer to his Government recommending an invasion from Deal. The road to London was

¹ Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 300.

² *Rockingham Memoirs*, i. 295.

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minutely described. The people would make no resistance: there was nothing to fear from their resistance, if they were paid in ready money for supplies taken, and were promised relief from a tyrannical Government: they were 'un peuple mou qui ignore absolument l'usage des armes': fifty thousand troops would be ample for all purposes. It was even suggested that Charles Edward should be brought over to grace the triumphal entry into the capital.¹ But the Frenchmen did not come, and the sufferings of the working people were not so anxiously heeded then as they are now.

'Except India and Corn Supply at home, there was nothing to arrest materially the public attention,' wrote the Duke of Grafton afterwards. It was, indeed, India that provided the principal occupation of the Government. The tendency of policy was to transfer power from the Company to the Crown, and in many ways North, in the course of years, came into contact with Indian affairs.

In spite of a temporary lull, however, the Government set out by no means under smiling skies. There was no hearty spirit of union amongst its members. The problems of America and Wilkes were waiting for solution, and upon these vital issues opinions were divided: Camden and Conway, for example, were at the opposite extreme from North and Townshend. Had Pitt retained his health and his place in the House of

¹ Lord Stanhope : *History of England*, v. 247.

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Commons, he might have enforced discipline and reconciled diverging views ; but his influence was damaged in more ways than one. He became Earl of Chatham and incurred a burden of obloquy and a loss of credit that were obviously unjust, and were more fit to be reserved for one of our own democratic Radicals who should suddenly become enamoured of a coronet. There was every justification for Pitt : beyond his character, position, and public record, he had the plea of health. And herein lay the greater detriment to the conduct of Government. Within three months of taking office, he fell ill : six months after that, he was in the throes of one of his paroxysms, and his control was irretrievably destroyed. In December 1766 discord was revealed by the resignations of the Duke of Portland, Lords Bessborough, and Scarbrough, and of Saunders and Keppel from the Admiralty.¹ Chatham had recently required the office of Treasurer of the Household for his friend Shelley : Lord Edgcumbe declined to retire, and he was abruptly dismissed, in spite of angry protests from some of Chatham's colleagues.

But the fountain of all mischief was Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was grandson of the Lord Townshend who had been Walpole's brother-in-law, colleague, and rival. He was born in 1725, and was now past forty : he had been in office since 1754, and was not without experience.

¹ Lecky, iii. 302.

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Nor was he without abilities, and those of the highest, or nearly the highest, order. Horace Walpole says of him that when he attained his maturity he exceeded everybody, and that in wit he surpassed Burke. Burke was not jealous and called him the delight and ornament of the House of Commons. Amongst many talents he possessed the precious gift of succeeding. He played joyously upon the world, and the world responded to his touch. He is credited with exuberant spirits, and his native gaiety was not clouded by any sombre austerity of habit. One of his last orations in Parliament has passed into history as his Champagne speech. To set against these advantages, he was dangerously deficient in caution and sense of responsibility. Lord John Russell, as the biographer of Charles Fox, has condemned him as 'a man utterly without principle, whose brilliant talents only made more prominent his want of truth, honour, and consistency.' And it was into his hands that the control of the Cabinet passed when Chatham went into retreat. Whence it comes to pass that careless students associate with Chatham's name a policy which Chatham would have been the first to denounce and disavow.

In January 1767 Townshend moved the continuation of the land-tax at four shillings in the pound. A combination of political opponents, and squires from their country seats, carried an amendment to reduce four shillings to three shillings, upon which the Chancellor jauntily

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declared that he knew how revenue could be drawn from America without raising opposition; and the cloud which had risen and passed a year ago, came sailing up again into the western sky.

But this was not all. It has been noted that the East India Company had been causing anxiety, and in their affairs Chatham retained a personal interest. Here he found his Chancellor of the Exchequer refractory and insubordinate. As early as December 7th, 1766, he was writing to the Duke of Grafton: 'Mr. Charles Townshend's fluctuations and incurable weaknesses cannot comport with his remaining in that critical office.' In March 1767 Townshend openly opposed the Government upon a motion for Indian papers, and drew from Chatham an ultimatum:

'The writer hereof and the Chancellor of the Exchequer aforesaid cannot remain in office together, or Mr. Charles Townshend must amend his proceedings.'

Then it was that North was offered the post from which his unruly colleague was to be dismissed. But North declined. His own explanation of this decision is not forthcoming; but it is reasonable to infer from what we shall presently find him writing, that he was truly diffident of his own powers, and perfectly sincere in his reluctance to cope with what, in the circumstances, might well have been regarded a *damnosa hæreditas*.

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Grafton was Prime Minister, and his version¹ of what followed may be accepted as the most reliable amongst several not wholly consistent. He says that North was pledged to secrecy when the offer was made, but that he improperly reported the transaction to Townshend himself. It was North's fate to be accused in the course of years of many crimes, but he was never charged with duplicity; as, for example, Shelburne was charged. Lord John Russell, who is one of his most severe critics, draws the line here: 'Every fault except personal dishonesty,' says he, 'may justly be imputed to Lord North.' Walpole was no thick-and-thin supporter of North. At various times, and for various reasons, he held him in hatred and contempt, and in this humour he repeats with glee a story of one of his relatives, whose criticism on a portrait of North ran thus:

'It needed an able painter to make so good a picture of such an ugly man as Lord North, but to have made it a perfect likeness he should have drawn his inside as hideous as his outside.'

Yet Walpole, in a calmer mood, recorded that North 'did not much shine but by that respect paid to his irreproachable character.'

If, therefore, North betrayed a confidence now, let it be assumed that he acted injudiciously, not unfaithfully. But the consequences were evil indeed. Lord Stanhope deprecates the discussion of personalities in the study of history; but he goes

¹ *Memoirs of Augustus Henry, 3rd Duke of Grafton*, edited by Sir William Anson.

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on to offer for speculation the possible consequences had North accepted the Chancellorship in March 1767. It were perhaps an unprofitable enquiry, but not because it involves a study of the characters of two individuals. So long as the work of man engages our attention, we must surely reckon with those men by whom the works are done. It cannot be alleged that North would never have thought of taxing America; it can be shown that to his refusal of office the immediate taxation of America was due.

Townshend knew that North was not prepared to replace him; he had, then, nothing to fear, and he became reckless.¹ In May he brought into Parliament his measures for taxing glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea, imported into the American Colonies—and in fifteen years these colonies were to become an independent nation.

In September Townshend's lively career was abruptly ended by a fever. The vacant office was again offered to North; and again he declined. This time he gave the state of his father's health as the impediment. And this was not altogether an invention. On September 10th, 1767, Mr. Lloyd wrote to the Earl of Buckinghamshire this gossip:

‘Lord North came to town yesterday, saw the D. of Grafton and was at the King's levée. It is generally said that he has refused the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and as generally known that he will accept, if compelled by the alternative of taking that office or having none at all. Lord

¹ Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 319.

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Guilford is in a dangerous state of health, this may possibly operate on Lord North's present conduct.'¹

Later, on November 1st, Walpole wrote to his friend, George Montagu, who was North's private secretary: 'I hear Lord Guildford (*sic*) is much better, so that the Exchequer will still find you in funds.' Lord Guilford no doubt was ill.

When North declined, the appointment was offered to Lord Barrington, who accepted. However, North changed his mind, or was overruled by his father, who, sick or well, would have his son Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he recanted his refusal. Barrington was requested without ceremony to retire. He was ever the most accommodating of ministers, and to this sacrifice he consented. North became Chancellor of the Exchequer (September 1767).

North's preferment has been attributed to the Princess Mother.² It has been stated that he

'was prevailed upon by the Princess Dowager and his father the Earl of Guilford, to accept the difficult place of Chancellor of the Exchequer.'³

The interference of the Princess is neither probable nor necessary for purposes of explanation. She may have said something to somebody in favour of his accepting, but she was not pulling the wires. 'I knew him to be a man of strict honour,' wrote Grafton afterwards, 'and he was besides the

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., Lothian Papers.

² *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, edited by W. B. Donne, p. lxxxii.

³ *Pictorial History of England*, v. 59.

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person whom Lord Chatham desired to bring to that very post.'

How far his father's health really hindered North it is not easy to say: the greater probability lies in the assumption that he wavered as he was prone to waver throughout his life. He shrank from so bold a step forward and threw the responsibility upon Lord Guilford. Clearly the father approved of the final decision, for we find North writing, on October 12th, 1767:

'We are infinitely obliged to your lordship for your very kind letter. I speak in Lady North's name as well as my own. . . . I take an early opportunity of acknowledging your kindness. . . . I entirely agree with Lord Dacre in his notion of the principle dangers of my office. I will . . . guard against them. . . . I ride out every morning at eight o'clock, have no cook of my own, and not a single friend in town. The Duke of Grafton did not come to town time enough on Wednesday to be at the Cabinet, so I was not summoned. But I have seen him since, and he has assured me that he understood it to be the King's intention that I should be always summoned and considered as a member of the Cabinet. I have not the vanity to imagine that my advice can be of any consequence, . . . but it will be very difficult for me to act in concert with the Cabinet, and promote their plans in Parliament, unless I am present at the meetings at which they are formed.'¹

And on the 14th:²

'Though your lordship's good opinion of me has probably a great mixture of partiality in it, it

¹ *North American Review*, cit.

² *Ibid.*

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makes me inexpressibly happy. . . . I am afraid it will soon be found how unequal my abilities are to the task in which I am engaged, but if His Majesty and his Ministers have an insufficient (*sic*) Chancellor of the Exchequer they may thank themselves for it, for I can truly say I never obtruded myself upon them and do not desire to continue in my place an hour after it shall be found prejudicial to the public.'

North was Chancellor of the Exchequer; but he was not promoted to the Cabinet as a matter of course. We shall meet with a number of episodes that show the difference between the principles of Cabinet responsibility of that day and of this: for the moment a few instances will suffice. The origin and status of the Cabinet have been examined in another book:¹ the looseness of language in which Cabinets were described was there illustrated by Walpole's information to George Montagu in 1760, that the Duke of York and Lord Bute had been 'named Cabinet Counsellors'; when he meant that they had been sworn of the Privy Council. Even the redoubtable Townshend had not been admitted to the Cabinet at once: he 'teazed Mr. Pitt to admit him,' says Grafton. The Duke himself had been outvoted in his own Cabinet by Townshend and his followers; and when Shelburne, who was of the Grafton faction, appealed to Chatham for advice, he could get no better comfort than the amazing avowal of the master that
'his fixed purpose had always been and still was

¹ *George II. and his Ministers*, by the author.

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not to be a proposer of plans, but so far as a seat in one House enabled him, an unbiassed judge of them.'

In 1766 Grenville talked of the expense of the German War, 'of which I always disapproved,' although he had clung to his office of Treasurer of the Navy. He was not promoted to the Cabinet until 1761, but his appointment had been one of ministerial liability, involving the lead in the House of Commons. In the same year the Lord Chancellor Northington, and the Secretary at War, Barrington, voted against the repeal of the Stamp Act without resigning. When Chatham turned Lord Edgcumbe out of the Household to make room for his friend Shelley, Conway, then leader of the House of Commons,

'dropped all intercourse with Lord Chatham and though he continued to conduct the King's business in the House of Commons he would neither receive nor pay any deference to the minister's orders, acting for or against as he approved or disliked his measures.'¹

In January 1768 he resigned the seals of office, but was persuaded by the King to continue 'Minister of the House of Commons,' a member of the Cabinet, and what Mr. Lecky calls 'apparent leader of the House of Commons.'² Even this office is left to drift in some obscurity, for it is usual to describe North as leader now.³

¹ Walpole: *Last Journals*, ii. 385.

² *History*, iii. 351.

³ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

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‘There is now no Prime Minister,’ said Dr. Johnson in April 1775; ‘he is only agent for Government in the House of Commons.’

Camden’s disloyalty in 1770 was so flagrant that Grafton was driven to dismiss him; but next year he himself accepted the high office of Privy Seal from North on the condition that he should not be of the Cabinet, because he was not sufficiently in sympathy with its members. Elsewhere he talks of the

‘excellent custom of conference with colleagues and followers, the disuse of which had led to accustom a majority to place a more implicit confidence in a minister than the principles of free government can well admit.’

During the peace negotiations of 1783 Shelburne refrained from holding Cabinet Councils in order to conceal the want of harmony that existed.¹

Since George I. had found his ignorance of the English language a bar to his comprehension of Cabinet discussions, the presence of the Sovereign had ceased to be part of the unwritten law and practice, although the Duke of Cumberland had been admitted when he was carrying on negotiations in 1765. Yet it should seem that George III. was not afraid of sending for his Cabinet if he had a mind to consult or, more likely, to instruct them. We read that on January 19th, 1781, ‘Despatches having come from Sir James Harris

¹ *William Pitt and the National Revival*, J. H. Rose, 114.

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[concerning the armed neutrality] the King summoned Ministers to the Queen's House. . . . Lord Sandwich said the usual way was for the youngest to begin. . . . Lord North, forgetting that he stood above Lord Amherst, began without rising. He was followed by Lord A. and the others standing.'¹

It may be added that this curious entry is found in the Journals of Queen Victoria—1837, July 15th :

‘At a few minutes past 2 I went into one of the large drawing-rooms and held a Cabinet Council, at which were present all the Ministers. The Council lasted but a very short while.’

For what purpose—presumably formal—this Cabinet was held, we are not informed.²

But if it was no longer usual for King George to attend the Cabinet in person, he was certainly the most powerful element in its composition and a factor to be reckoned with in its deliberations :

‘Lord North will apprise the Cabinet that on Thursday Lord Hillsborough will receive the seals of Secretary of State.’

That is an example of the language he used to his Prime Minister after nearly ten years of office (1779). North told Thurlow that he had the King's commands to make this appointment.

North, then, had arrived at the highest office short of that of first minister a few weeks after his

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.

² *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, i. 215.

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thirty-fifth birthday, and even his cautious spirit had no immediate excuse for dismay :

‘At that time,’ wrote Grafton, ‘there was much to encourage and little to alarm any honest man entering into a ministerial situation.’

But next year and the year after he was telling another tale :

‘If Lord North did not rise in popularity without doors,’ he goes on, ‘he rose greatly in the estimation of those who were the best judges of distinguished parliamentary abilities. At the Treasury his talents for business in finance were eminently superior to anything we had seen in Mr. Charles Townshend . . . but the internal state of the country was truly alarming’ ;

the discontents in England, Ireland, and America were ‘threatening to a high degree.’ The Cabinet was divided and determined to resign.

North was sufficiently criticised in later years for his methods of raising money, but he was a capable exponent of a scheme, and was not of the type of Sir Francis Dashwood, whose Budgets had to be drawn to include only proposals so simple that he could understand them, even if he could not explain them. King George early declared that ‘Lord North is remarkably clear in stating matters of finance’ ; and Rigby told the Duke of Bedford in 1769 that

‘yesterday Lord North opened his Budget in Committee of Ways and Means and in the twenty-four years I have sat in Parliament I verily think I have never known one of his predecessors acquit themselves so much to the satisfaction of the

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House. . . . No part of Lord North's State of the Nation hurt Grenville more than to see that there is a man in it and in the House of Commons who showed himself yesterday at least his equal in finance.'¹

This honourable reputation he never forfeited. Wraxall, writing years afterwards, says :

'In opening the Budget he was esteemed peculiarly lucid, clear, and able. . . . I was twice present at his performance of this arduous task ('81 and '82). Each performance appeared to me very deserving of the encomiums lavished on it.'

He goes on to say that North was far superior in the performance of this task to Lord John Cavendish, but he admits that there could be no comparison with the superlative excellence of Pitt.

At the end of 1767 there was a reconstruction of the Cabinet. The Duke of Bedford was not prepared to take office, but he approved of the going in of his 'party.' Northington, Lord President, and Conway, Secretary of State, gave up their places to Gower and Weymouth. Sandwich became Postmaster-General, and Rigby found his way to the Pay Office as the proper destination of the most ardent and greedy of party politicians. A few weeks later a third Secretaryship of State, for the management of the Colonies, was created, and to this was nominated Hillsborough. The Colonies had formerly come within the province of the Board of Trade and Foreign Plantations. We have seen that in 1763 Shelburne, and in 1766

¹ *Bedford Correspondence*, iv. 408.

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Dartmouth, resigned this office because the Colonies were to be kept under the Secretary of State for the Southern Department. Now they were to be given a Secretary of their own; and truly they needed one. It would be interesting to know whether North tried to obtain the offer for his friend Dartmouth. He was to succeed, upon North's own nomination, in 1772. His presence at this moment might have modified the course of history. It would be rash to say that he would have averted war and separation. Perhaps no human being could have done that; matters had probably gone too far for any individual to undo all that had been done, and ensure that nothing of the kind should ever be heard of again. But Dartmouth's views were essentially of a peaceful and conciliatory kind. Hillsborough was a different type of man. Walpole dismisses him as a 'tragic scaramouch.' The King once said of him:

'I am sorry to say I do not know a man of less judgment than Lord Hillsborough, and consequently less qualified to fill that office (Lord Lieutenant) with dignity and propriety.'¹

He was impulsive and obstinate. So 'thorough' were his methods that he had to complain of North's 'flimsy way of doing business.' On two occasions, as we shall hear, he took upon himself to aggravate the fever that was rising in America, by the scolding and peremptory tone of his dispatches.

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

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Of the others, Gower was a sensible and respectable man, unfit for high office on any other score than that of rank, though often near the highest; and not a memorable figure in history. Weymouth was not a strong man, and was to leave the Government in the lurch at an awkward moment in 1770. Rigby was as 'thorough' as Hillsborough. According to Walpole, it was his opinion that America had become so powerful that it ought to be put back fifty years by the vigorous policy of destroying the principal towns. Wraxall says that 'he was not supposed to lie under the dominion of any fastidious scruples.' He clung lovingly to office, and 'died leaving near half a million of public money.'¹

Of Sandwich we shall hear more as First Lord of the Admiralty during the war. His name is the best remembered of the group; not, alas, to his credit: it may be with reproach not fully justified. He is commemorated in the islands of the North Pacific that bear his name, and immortalised in something to eat that he invented. It is, at least, evidence of a diligent habit that he conceived the device of filling his pockets with slices of meat enclosed in bread in order to save the luncheon interval.

The advent of the Bedford Whigs was momentous: they supplied the most uncompromising and bellicose element as the conflict with America developed itself. But not less

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

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noteworthy was the subsequent resignation of Chatham and Shelburne. It will be more convenient to say something of Shelburne in a later chapter. Enough now to note that he had originally entertained against Chatham something akin to antipathy. In the reflection of later life he was moved to some tolerably severe criticism.¹ But during the dozen years preceding Chatham's death, they were in close alliance. Chatham favoured him with a good deal of pompous civility; but there was no true friendship. It was a union of convenience. On public grounds, at all events, Shelburne found it congenial. He was in favour of dealing tenderly with the Americans. It was his conviction that they would return to their allegiance as soon as common ground was discovered for the basis of a military contribution. Grafton wrote to Chatham (October 5th, 1768) that Shelburne had become impossible, and that he was determined to dismiss him. He added that he intended to deprive Amherst of the Governorship of Virginia, 'a post which he held, but the work of which he did not do,' as Sir George Trevelyan tartly observes. 'I cannot enough lament the removal of Sir Jeffrey Amherst and that of Lord Shelburne,' was Chatham's reply to Grafton on October 12th, 1768. Amherst had, according to Walpole, immoderate self-interest and obstinacy: at all events he managed to survive; but a few days later it was known that

¹ Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, chapters i. and ii.

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both Chatham and Shelburne were out. Shelburne resigned on October 19th; Chatham, foreseeing the inevitable issue, anticipated him by a few days.¹

Meanwhile, the country had been visited by a period of what is now called 'unrest.' Lord Stanhope gives as the principal cause of this the high price of provisions and consequent resentment of the people, though they scarcely knew against what or whom.² Seamen struck for an increase of wages, and began to riot. Coal-heavers, thrown out of work in consequence, 'took the field, as it were, against the sailors'³—which suggests that the principle of the sympathetic strike had not yet been discovered. On the other hand, the Spitalfield weavers, who were also on strike, 'broke the looms of those who refused to join in their demands,'⁴ in which the spirit of peaceful picketing is at once apparent. And it is well worth remarking that an act was immediately passed to make this illegal. A man named Green who was 'obnoxious to the coal-heavers' was besieged in his house, after the manner of Sidney Street. He succeeded in killing eighteen of his foes and escaping. To celebrate this achievement his sister gave a supper party, and was murdered then and there by the coal-heavers.⁵

It was unfortunate that the Wilkes agitation should have come at this moment to find mischief

¹ Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 398.

² *History*, v. 291. ³ *Ibid.* 297.

⁴ *Political History of England*, x. 89. ⁵ *Grafton Memoirs*, 189.

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still for the idle hands to do. Mr. Lecky describes the situation in the following passage, giving, it will be noted, a different account of the relations existing between the sailors and the coal-heavers :

‘ Strikes were very numerous and London was full of poor idle reckless men prepared for the most desperate enterprise. Six thousand weavers were the most active agents in the Wilkes riots. Four thousand sailors on board merchant ships in the Thames mutinied for higher wages, and stopped by force all outward-bound ships. . . . The watermen . . . hatters, tailors, glass-grinders, were soon on strike, and during two or three years London witnessed scenes of riot that could hardly have been surpassed in Connaught or the Highlands. . . . At Wapping and Stepney the coal-heavers . . . boarded the ships and compelled the sailors to cease from work . . . and fought bloody battles with (them) in the streets. . . . The Spitalfield weavers . . . were accustomed to . . . range through the streets disguised and armed, breaking into the shops of weavers who refused to strike. . . . A law was passed making the offence capital. . . . Two cutters were hanged under the new law, but a man named Clarke, who had been chief witness against them . . . was deliberately stoned to death.’¹

Horne Tooke, the most unstable of men and of agitators, once advised an audience: ‘ If you wish to be powerful, pretend to be powerful,’ and truly there were signs and wonders in the land. Lord Camden in the House of Lords declared that

‘ a spirit of discontent has spread into every

¹ *History*, iii. 324-5.

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corner of the kingdom. If some methods are not devised . . . I know not whether the people in despair may not . . . take the redress of grievances into their own hands.'

Mr. Lecky goes on: 'Language breathing all the violence of revolution had become habitual'; and he names the year 1769 as the birthday of English Radicalism.¹

There appears to have been a spirit of despondency abroad: Croaker, in the *Good-natured Man*, which belongs to this epoch, makes his lament:

'Indeed, what signifies what weather we have in a country going to ruin like ours? Taxes rising and trade falling. Money flying out of the kingdom, and Jesuits swarming into it?'

Foreign investments were presumably in demand. More than that: the Dukes were already looking abroad for an asylum in the hour of affliction. A year or two later the Duke of Richmond accounted for his anxiety to establish his claim to a peerage and estate in France by the fact that

'a time would soon come when England would not be worthy to live in, and a retreat in France must be a very happy thing for a free man to have':

an opinion which he probably recanted after 1789.

It does not appear that North in the midst of these disturbing scenes lost his nerve or regretted his acceptance of office. His Toryism was not

¹ iii. 372.

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cowed: his tendency to dally by the way relieved him of the burden of responsibility. In 1768 he played his natural part in a curious case. In the North of England there dwelt a man who is drolly described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as 'unrivalled in the art of electioneering'; this was Sir James Lowther, afterwards first Earl of Lonsdale. His wealth was very great; so was his eccentricity.¹ In the course of his political exercises he conceived the desire of destroying the power of his political rival, the Duke of Portland. The Duke held certain properties by grant from the Crown; and Sir James, equipping himself with legal points of a subtle kind, set up a claim for the transfer of these unto himself, on the ground that the rights of the Crown were never affected by lapse of time. It was a gross case of what is now called jerrymandering, and there were few of his own party to uphold Sir James. King George said of him a little later:

'What has passed this day in the House of Commons is a fresh proof that truth, justice, and even honour, are constantly to be given up whenever they relate to Sir James Lowther.'

To defeat this attempt, a very worthy politician, Sir George Savile, introduced a measure known in history as the Nullum Tempus Bill, which barred all rights of the Crown in the case of lands already enjoyed by the owners for sixty years. North

¹ Readers are recommended to look for an account of this gentleman in *Annals of a Yorkshire House*, by Mrs. Stirling.

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opposed it, and afterwards included this vote in the catalogue of opposition to popular proposals of which he made a boast. But with his innate habit of temporising 'he did not venture to withstand it openly,' we are told: 'he pleaded the impropriety of time.'¹ He secured its rejection for the moment, but next year the bill was passed into law.

On April 10th, 1769, North 'opened his budget' in the speech that Rigby so much admired. It is worth recording because it represents his favourite financial thesis—the necessity of paying off debt. It will be found that in his last speech in the House of Lords, a very short time before his death, he repeated in substance what he was saying now. It is also to be observed that his path was so far smooth that no answer or debate followed his statement:

'The civil list . . . was a debt which every person must see the absolute necessity of discharging directly and . . . the navy debt . . . reduced to as low a sum as possible . . . to supply the navy on a future war, by taking on credit what the wants of the State might make difficult to be got with money. . . . A lottery being a tax on the willing only, though many might object to it, as an encouragement to gaming, yet he thought the public would be right to avail themselves of the follies of mankind. . . . From the improving state of the sinking fund he hoped the nation would be able to discharge at least a million and a half of debt every year; when the people in the Alley . . . would naturally turn their minds to the old

¹ *Stanhope*, v. 288.

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stocks and consequently . . . restore public credit to its pristine state. . . . On the whole he comforted us that our situation was far from wearing the gloomy aspect which Englishmen were fond of.’¹

The *Parliamentary History* had still taken no notice of North during the session of 1768. Not even his Budget speech was reported. But this year he comes into full view. On January 23rd he spoke in a Wilkes debate, and more than once afterwards; on April 15th, for instance, when we are told that he ‘spoke long, but chiefly to the passions.’ On March 14th Mr. Trecothick ‘offered to present a representation of the General Assembly of New York,’ and North laid down in uncompromising language the principle upon which his Majesty’s Government intended to proceed :

‘North opposed its being brought up, seeing they denied the right of Parliament to tax them; if they petitioned to remove any grievance, it was another thing; but Parliament having passed a law declaratory of its right to tax America, nothing should be received arraigning that right.’²

Then he made a rash assertion which, on the evidence of subsequent experience, he might have found it difficult to confirm :

‘The navy was in a very good state of repair; the magazines full of materials for shipbuilding, and the number of sailors in pay at least double those in the late peace.’

¹ *Parliamentary History*.

² *Ibid.*

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The Wilkes agitation was raging furiously, destined to leave a permanent and most quickening effect on the political life of the country 'in the establishment of the Platform once and for ever as the mouthpiece of the people.'¹ North had taken an active part at the outset of the Wilkes episode and it was to disturb his peace hereafter ; but for the present he was serene. On Christmas Day, 1769, he wrote to his father from

'Ashted . . . Notwithstanding the untoward political events of the last year, I never felt more perfectly easy, happy, and self-satisfied than I do at present ; I think I have done what I ought, and what every reasonable and honest man will approve. I feel myself totally disencumbered from all connexions, obligations, and engagements, and entirely free to chase (? pursue) the path that my conscience and opinion dictates (*sic*). A very pleasant feel it is ! I think I have done by all parties as handsomely as they could desire, and perhaps more than they could in justice demand. What is past gives me no regret. My present situation is comfortable and my future prospects by no means unpleasing. I may add that my pride which was, I confess, a little mortified in the course of the year, has by the late offer been gratified to the utmost of its wish. Though in many of the questions that will arise in the course of this session I shall be forced, from fixed opinion, to differ from the present ministers, yet I shall do it without the least spleen or ill will to their persons.'²

This letter gives another illustration of the

¹ *The Platform*, by Henry Jephson, i. 41.

² *North American Review*, *cit.*

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freedom from allegiance to cabinet colleagues which the temper of the times permitted. In July 1769, Chatham had suddenly reappeared, in no friendly mood towards the Government. Camden, the Lord Chancellor, who had been and was to be again Grafton's particular friend, and who had been 'the sharpest interpreter of Chatham's long sickness and of his late conduct,'¹ and was afterwards to describe his death as 'a fortunate event,'² fell under the spell of his power. Chatham attacked the Government on the Address (January 1770): Camden supported him with the snivelling explanation that he had often looked disapproval in the Cabinet, but had felt it was waste of time to lift up his voice in protest. On the 17th he was turned out of office.

North's speech in this debate is of some importance. It gives us a guiding line by which we may follow the course of his mind and consequently of his policy throughout the American War. It amplifies what he had said on Mr. Trecothick's motion of the year before:

'If both lenient measures and force have hitherto failed of the desired effects, is administration to be blamed? The contest which at first might easily have been ended is now grown serious. It is now for no less than sovereignty on one side and independence on the other. Will any minister dare to give up the sovereignty of

¹ Buckingham: *Memoirs of the Courts and Cabinets of George III.*, iv. 64.

² *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 357.

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this country over her colonies ? or will any minister venture to declare open war but upon the last extremity to maintain that sovereignty ?'

And again he committed himself to a sanguine estimate of the country's readiness for war :

' The assertion that some gentlemen have been pleased to throw out in the course of this debate that this nation is in no condition to go to war is not true. It is at this hour in a better condition to go to war than any of its rivals or its enemies.'¹

To fill the vacancy caused by Camden's dismissal, Grafton selected Charles Yorke, a man of much ability ; aiming through him at an enlistment of the Rockingham faction. Yorke was eager to accept : his Rockingham colleagues were as eager to prevent him. He drifted helplessly to and fro ; gave way to the blandishments of the King ; sank under the reproaches of his friends ; and died within a few days : a suicide, it was supposed.

It is not unreasonable to surmise that in this jumble of alliances North would have been drawn by temperament and former association towards sharing Camden's affinity with Chatham—American politics permitting ; which, indeed, was not going to be the case. To this extent at all events he felt justified in declaring himself unfettered by connections. How his pride had been mortified during the year we cannot tell.

¹ *Parliamentary History.*

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He had certainly had the best of the contest with Grafton where American affairs were concerned. It is worth suggesting that Conway's presence in the House of Commons was an offence. He had thrown up office and he had been urged to continue 'Minister in the House of Commons,' as though the Chancellor of the Exchequer were incapable of carrying on business. The Chancellor may have known and resented Grafton's desire to bring in the Rockingham faction, even to the detriment of North. How these vexations were removed by the 'late offer' it is impossible to say. Possibly he had been promised recognition as leader of the House of Commons. He had this year been made an honorary LL.D. of Cambridge University; but we may be sure he was not speaking of that. Conceivably, not improbably indeed, in the warnings of approaching collapse, an intimation had reached him that the King had singled him out to be his next minister.

On January 27th, 1770, Grafton resigned, protesting that 'his head turned.' But it is certain that his intention had been known; at all events suspected. Yorke died on the 20th. Grafton then offered the seals to de Grey, the Attorney-General, who asked whether he was determined to persevere or not. Grafton frankly said no, and de Grey at once declined.

More than that: four days before Grafton's resignation was formally accepted the King wrote thus to North:

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‘ *Queen’s House,*

‘ *January 23rd, 1770.*

‘ *40 minutes past 10 a.m.*

‘ Lord North,

‘ After seeing you last night I saw Lord Weymouth, who by my direction will wait upon you with Lord Gower this morning to press upon you in the strongest manner to accept the office of First Commissioner of the Treasury ; my mind is more and more strengthened with the rightness of the measure, which would prevent every other desertion. You must easily see that, if you do not accept, I have no other peer at present in my service I could consent to place in the Duke of Grafton’s employment. Whatever you think, do not take any decision, unless it is one of instantly accepting, without a further conversation with me. As to the other arrangements you may hear what others think, but keep your own opinion till I have seen you.’

There is nothing in this letter to discredit the suggestion that as far back as Christmas overtures had been passing and that North was aware that he was likely to be placed in Grafton’s office. He was now three months short of his thirty-eighth birthday, and he had arrived at the highest position in the King’s Government.

CHAPTER IV

WILKES

DR. JOHNSON once declared of North's Government, 'I will not say that what they did was always wrong, but it was always done at a wrong time.' One may borrow this criticism and say that what was done to Wilkes was not always wrong, but it was always done in the wrong way.

The character of Wilkes is not easy to appraise. He must have possessed some very valuable qualities: he had many vices, and he was hideously ugly; yet it is beyond dispute that he inspired liking and even affection; and not only amongst bad men. He was admired by Gibbon, was a friend of Reynolds, and even conquered the prejudice of Johnson, by whom his politics and morals must have been deemed frightful. It is manifest that he possessed infinite spirit, and talent approaching to genius of a distorted kind: otherwise he could not have remained so long the central and indomitable figure in a fierce and perilous struggle. Yet when he had finally conquered all his enemies, and taken his seat unchallenged in the House of Commons, he subsided at once into ignominious



Engraved by R. B. Pine

Supposed by John Milton

John Milton

CHAPTER II

WILKES

DR. JOHNSON once declared of the Government, 'I will not say that what they did was always wrong, but it was often done at a wrong time.' One may borrow this criticism and say that what was done to Wilkes was not always wrong, but it was always done in the wrong way.

The character of Wilkes is not easy to grasp. He must have possessed some very remarkable qualities, for he had many vices, and he was notoriously vain; yet it is beyond dispute that he inspired respect and even affection; and not only amongst his friends, but men. He was admired by Gibbon, was a friend of Reynolds, and even conquered the respect of Johnson, by whom his politics and personal habits have been deemed frightful. It is certain that he possessed infinite spirit, and intense application to genius of a distorted kind; otherwise he would not have remained so long the central figure in the political life of his country. He was a noble figure in a fierce and passionate world, when he had finally conquered all his enemies, and taken his own revenge, and when he was at last at home, he was at home in a world of confusion, he was at home in a world of confusion.



Painted by R. S. Pine.

Engraved by James Watson.

John Wilkes.

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obscurity. Here is his character according to Horace Walpole :

‘This hero is as bad a fellow as ever hero was ; abominable in private life, dull in Parliament ; but, they say, very entertaining in a room, certainly no bad writer, besides having had the honour of contributing to Lord Bute’s fall.’

Dull as he may have been in Parliament, he nevertheless succeeded in leaving his mark there ; and a permanent and sinister mark it was. In Sir George Trevelyan’s opinion

‘the furious popular excitement and vast amount of Parliamentary time which had been expended on seating and unseating Wilkes had in the end lowered the tone and relaxed the springs of politics.’¹

That he was a bad man, and an undesirable politician, may be admitted. His private life was indecent : he was a patriot from necessity, and a reformer by accident. His apologists, indeed, can argue plausibly enough that, thanks to Wilkes and his struggles, some arbitrary and evil practices of Government were exposed, condemned, and abolished ; that the rights of electors were protected ; that liberty of the Press was won. But Wilkes set out to do none of these things. ‘Wilkes’ was his real motto : ‘Liberty’ was tacked on by the multitude that he despised as much as they adored him. ‘Sir, I hold in my hand a petition to present from a most intelligent,

¹ *The American Revolution*, i. 28.

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independent, and enlightened body of men': thus he addressed the Speaker, when he was allowed to discharge his duties as a Member of Parliament. He had previously given private notice that he had to present a petition from 'a pack of the greatest scoundrels on the face of the earth.' Probably he was much more astounded than gratified when he found he had been a benefactor to his fellow-countrymen. He had entered on a parliamentary career with no loftier aspirations, with no more distinct or beneficial object in view, than the provincial attorney who is driven to Westminster by the importunities of a wife, who has set her heart on seeing his name in the Birthday list of Knights. Yet these proud achievements came to him as the rich reward of his labours and his afflictions, and with a fulness of adulation that must have appealed to his sense of humour: and throughout the tremendous trial in which he was the defendant and the State itself was plaintiff, he almost always contrived to put himself in the right and the Government in the wrong.

His origin was inconspicuous: his father was a Clerkenwell distiller, who sent him to school in England and afterwards to Leyden University. How he made his way into the world of fashion is not recorded, but no social bars were held up against him. He was elected to the sublime Society of Beefsteaks, a community with a good conceit of themselves. His amazing ugliness

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seems to have been forgotten in the delight of his conversation. When somebody asked one of his friends if he did not think Wilkes's squint very terrible, the reply was that he only had as much squint as a gentleman should have. Unless Hogarth's picture does him serious injustice, it must have been the charm of magic that could so far blind the judgment of his companions : but Hogarth hated him.

There was another Society into which he was admitted with more notorious and damaging results. Sir Francis Dashwood was a man whose record reads well in analysis. He was an F.R.S. and a D.C.L. of Oxford. He was a prominent member of the Dilettanti Society. He was long in Parliament ; held Household appointments ; had a short and, it must be added, inglorious career as Chancellor of the Exchequer ; succeeded his uncle as Lord Despencer, and was finally Postmaster-General. But he had a ribald and obscene mind. It was his fancy to revive the monastic life of Medmenham Abbey, near Marlow, and he established there a brotherhood of Franciscans as appropriate to his own name. The alternative title of these worthy monks, the Hell-fire Club,¹ gives sufficient clue to the nature of their exercises. It was a freak worthy of Lower Boys, before they have shed their love of mischief and perverted taste for forbidden fruit. For men, and men of culture and good birth, it was a vulgar and stupid form of

¹ After the Duke of Wharton's club *circa* 1720

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debauch. Yet they were not abject hooligans. They contrived to keep their proceedings more or less secret, and it is difficult to give a list of fully initiated Brothers ; but there is no doubt that there were amongst them men of scholarly mind and artistic habit ; friends and associates of the collectors and critics of the Dilettanti Club. The biographer of Wilkes¹ believes that amongst the original twelve were Lord Orford, Horace Walpole's nephew ; Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcombe, who aspired to be a man of letters ; Paul Whitehead, a minor politician and satirical poet ; John Hall Stevenson, of ' Crazy Castle,' a lover of books and friend of Sterne ; Robert Lloyd, author of plays and poems ; Potter, the unworthy son of an Archbishop and a politician of some note ; and Churchill, whose faint streak of genius degraded more than it gave lustre to his name. With an affectation of classical elegance in their mottoes and exhortations, they set out to glorify a depraved and degrading form of recreation.

There can be little doubt that amongst the occasional visitors was Sandwich, whose shortcomings as a statesman were certainly not redeemed by any earnest seeking after right. His appearance as accuser of Wilkes soon afterwards was so astonishing that it could only be attributed to revenge. The story goes that Wilkes, one night, concealed a large baboon in a cupboard at Medmenham, and when the monks were in the middle

¹ *Life and Times of Wilkes*, by Percy Fitzgerald, i. 36.

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of some blasphemous rite, he let the animal loose with the terrifying assurance that they had brought the devil to their aid. Sandwich was fooled with the rest, and his humiliation cried aloud for vengeance. For this and other reasons, he may well have wished hereafter that he had stayed away.

There appears to be no record of the presence of the Duke of Grafton, but there was nothing in his principles or practice of morality to make this impossible. In later life he wrote with evident desire of dissociating himself from unclean tradition, but his confession is not conclusive; he only knew Wilkes slightly, he said; 'he may have dined with me two or three times and I may have met him . . . on visits to some of my friends'; he had never been in a room alone with him at any time. Perhaps not; but this does not prove that he never met him on a visit to Dashwood at Medmenham any more than it denies that he attempted to visit Wilkes during his imprisonment in the Tower. Not that this amiable effort need cover any discreditable connection; he was forbidden access together with Lord Temple, and Temple could be the friend and patron of Wilkes without being guilty of licentious living. It has already been said that Wilkes's friends were not exclusively bad men.

Wilkes, at the age of twenty-two, was provided by his family with a rich wife, ten years his senior. He squandered her money and repaid her with shameful infidelity and neglect; but it may here be said that his affection for their only child Mary,

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though there was a good deal that was selfish in it, was less careless than his heed of his illegitimate children, and was the most amiable symptom he displayed throughout his career. He had ambition. His friendship with Dashwood gave him an opening in Buckinghamshire; he became Colonel of the Militia and High Sheriff of the County. He was elected M.P. for Aylesbury,¹ and attached himself to the Grenville brotherhood. It has been said that he found favour with Gibbon, who made an entry in his journal about this time which shows what strange things may happen when civilians take to soldiering. Gibbon's heart was wholly set upon solitude and study; his military duties taxed his patriotism sorely, and this is how he found himself spending his time:

‘*Journal, Sept. 23rd, 1762.*—Colonel Wilkes, of the Buckinghamshire Militia, dined with us [Hampshire Militia]. . . . I scarcely ever met with a better companion; he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge. He told us himself that in this time of public dissension he was resolved to make his fortune. Upon this principle he has connected himself closely with Lord Temple and Mr. Pitt, commenced a public adversary to Lord Bute, whom he abuses weekly in the *North Briton*, and other political papers in which he is concerned. This proved a very debauched day: we drank a good deal both after dinner and supper; and when at last Wilkes had retired, Sir Thomas [Colonel Sir T. Worsley] and some others (of whom I was

¹ 1757. He had previously stood and been defeated at Berwick.

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not one) broke into his room and made him drink a bottle of Claret in bed.'

Very likely Gibbon, with his philosophical gravity, saw nothing humorous in this strange association: but humorous it certainly is, if not at all pleasing: and it shows us Wilkes through the eyes of a most competent observer.

Hitherto Wilkes had made no attempt to distinguish himself in Parliament. His ambition lay elsewhere. The Embassy at Constantinople, or a Governorship in Canada, appeared to him suited to his distressed finances and political attainments. Newcastle went out, and Bute came in (1762); and Wilkes found his aspirations sadly discouraged. To be revenged and to exhibit his powers, he founded a periodical called the *North Briton*. In this enterprise he was assisted by Churchill, with whom he seems to have shared a mutual attachment, as they shared a common weakness for dissipated life. Churchill was a renegade clergyman of profligate habit, whose reputation as a poet and satirist has not been upheld by the test of time. Together they sallied forth to belabour the Government in print. One of the first results of this was that Lord Talbot, the Lord Steward, called out Wilkes and made him fight a duel. Bute was unmoved and immovable.

In April 1763, Grenville came into power, but Wilkes's principal friend in the family was Temple, and Temple was now not on terms with his brother. Wilkes had not chosen badly

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when he enlisted as a follower of the brotherhood. Grenville was first minister. Temple had influence and was long to remain his good friend : and he was on intimate terms with Pitt, if he may be believed when he writes : ‘I passed three hours to-day in Pitt’s bed-chamber at Hayes.’ Sooner or later he was to quarrel with all his comrades and patrons. He was quickly estranged from George Grenville, and now and always he was bent on pursuing his own interests regardless of anything or anybody else. He scrupled not then to lay on his blows.

At the prorogation of Parliament he brought out No. 45 of his paper (April 23rd, 1763): in this he hit out vigorously at the Government and gave a sly back-hander at the King.¹ The King’s speech had belauded Bute’s foreign policy and the conclusion of peace. Wilkes poured out reproach and obloquy on the policy and on the ministers who now commended it ; and under the guise of exonerating a virtuous and benevolent monarch, who was nothing but the mouthpiece of his unfaithful stewards, he contrived to wound King George in his most sensitive spot. The Sovereign had no mind to be pitied as a helpless nonentity : to treat the Government as solely responsible, and the royal hand as nerveless and impotent, was an insult to be punished without demur. The order for the prosecution of Wilkes came from the

¹ It is said that he founded his article on a conversation that took place when he called upon Temple, whom he found in conference with Pitt.

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august individual to whom his effusive compliments had been addressed (April 29th).

The Government obediently issued what were known as general warrants, which gave extravagant powers of arrest. Printers, publishers, and the like, to the number of near fifty, were swept into the net. Wilkes was seized and carried before Egremont and Halifax, Secretaries of State, who ordered a domiciliary visit for the purpose of impounding all incriminating papers. Wilkes protested against the legality of general warrants and against the raid on his house, and claimed the privilege of a Member of Parliament. In spite of this he was committed to the Tower and was at once adorned with the halo of martyrdom. But he was not inspired with a spirit of humility : he demanded a writ of *Habeas Corpus*, and was brought before the Court of Common Pleas, where Chief Justice Pratt, afterwards Lord Chancellor Camden, ruled in his favour both in respect of his privilege as a Member of Parliament, and upon the principle of general warrants and the raids — judgments which were later confirmed by Lord Mansfield,¹ who was certainly no friend of demagogues. Wilkes then, restored to freedom (May 6th), brought actions against Halifax and Wood, his Under-Secretary : he was awarded 1000*l.* damages against Wood : Halifax succeeded in taking cover behind an official defence.

Wilkes being in the water was inclined to have

¹ Lecky, iii. 47.

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a good swim. He reprinted his offending pages with embellishments: the King had dismissed him from the Militia (May): Temple, his friend, had imparted the order to him in such soothing terms that he was himself turned out of the Lord-Lieutenancy of the County. Wilkes, by way of retaliation, announced that he had to endure this persecution because he had rejected the bribes by which Government had sought to bring him under subjection.

When Parliament met in November (1763), hue and cry were raised with that ardent relish that ever attends the pursuit of a politician in adversity. Grenville delivered a message from the King, and North moved on behalf of Government that No. 45 was a 'false, scandalous, and seditious libel, insulting alike to the Sovereign and Parliament, and tending to incite the public to traitorous insurrection.'

But this was not enough. In the joyous revelry of his success, Wilkes had allowed himself the luxury of printing for private circulation a parody of the 'Essay on Man,' called an 'Essay on Woman,' and a new version of the *Veni Creator*—echoes of Medmenham. His purpose of secrecy was at least so far successful that no copies of these compilations have been preserved; but their titles tell us all that we need to know of their contents. It is said that he was helped by his brother Franciscan, Potter, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury. To a third Franciscan,

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Sandwich, was entrusted the duty of denouncing them in the House of Lords as a scandalous, obscene, and impious libel, and, by reason of the impudent insertion of notes, alleged to be the work of the Bishop of Gloucester, a breach of privilege as well.

Wilkes averred that Sandwich was one of the few who had been permitted to partake of this literary feast in private. Whether this be so or not, it is difficult to believe that the new Secretary of State¹ acted because he was shocked. What the public thought about it may be gathered from the fact that next time 'The Beggar's Opera' was performed, the reproach of Captain Macheath, 'that Jemmy Twitcher should peach me I own rather surprises me,' was immediately taken up with a shout and turned to the shame of the faithless monk. As for the Peers, their withers were unwrung: they listened to Sandwich; voted as he advised; and prayed the King to prosecute Wilkes for blasphemy.

Meanwhile Wilkes, the martyr, was to become a hero. A politician named Martin had been assailed in the *North Briton*. In the course of the debates upon No. 45 he called the author a coward and a malignant scoundrel, and followed this up with a challenge. With so much deliberation and so many precautions did he make ready for this combat that it is evident he was determined that Wilkes should die. The duel, says

¹ Egremont had died in August.

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Mr. Lecky, 'bore all the signs of a deliberate and premeditated attempt to destroy him.' It is to be remarked that, according to Lord Macaulay, Wilkes was beside himself with rage at what he considered his betrayal; that it was he that forced on the quarrel and the fight.¹ The other is the version usually accepted, and more compatible with the rest of the story. Be that as it may, the two men met in Hyde Park on November 16th; and Wilkes behaved gallantly. He received Martin's fire; fell badly wounded; and was not incapable of solicitude for his assailant's risk of punishment.

The public had become excited. When the House of Commons decided that No. 45 should be burned by the hangman, they decided that it should not; and having rescued it from the flames, they burnt a jack-boot and petticoat instead—crude symbols of Bute and the King's mother. The Corporation of Dublin first, and then the City of London, made Wilkes their freeman. Sir Joshua Reynolds was commissioned to paint his portrait for the Guildhall: provincial artists were employed to produce signboards for many village inns. And Wilkes lay sick unto death with Martin's bullet in his body (November 1763).

Parliament had no intention of checking their pursuit on that account; but when they took the next step forward, they found themselves pulled up short. Wilkes was no longer in the country. He was, indeed, a hero with the multitude, but it was

¹ *Essays*, iv. 310.

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by no means his 'the applause of listening senates to command.' He had both Houses of Parliament against him, and it might well seem a forlorn hope to oppose these relentless powers with no better weapons than a couple of scrolls of parchment from the Corporations of London and Dublin, and a list of alehouse signboards. Moreover he had private foes. He had been foremost in attacking Bute and all the Scottish connection. In August, during a visit to Paris, a gentleman, giving the name of Captain Forbes, had challenged him to a duel. Wilkes had said he was determined to fight Lord Egremont before he risked his life in any other engagement. Egremont died suddenly, and Wilkes, who was no coward, at once enquired for Forbes: but Forbes had vanished. Then came the attack by Martin. No sooner was he out of this peril than another Scotchman, named Dunn, tried to assassinate him. He had suffered grievously from his wound; he was beset by many and great dangers: his strength and courage may have ebbed awhile; and at Christmas he fled to France. He went first to Paris: then to Boulogne, where he was joined by Churchill, who had sought to share in the ordeal of arrest, and whose loyal purpose Wilkes had thwarted with equal ingenuity and generosity.¹ But Churchill was dying. Wilkes attended him to the end, and under the impulse of genuine sorrow he assumed the responsibility of editing his friend's works. For his failure to fulfil

¹ Wilkes's own account of this is given in Fitzgerald, i. 140.

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this engagement he has been blamed;¹ but the task may well have been difficult at a distance from books, and Wilkes was to be a wanderer for four years. After 1768 he had little leisure for literary composition; and when he came into calmer days the desire was no longer urgent within him. Meanwhile he went his ways to Italy, not unaccompanied. He had abandoned his wife, but the charm which he could use with men was not less effective with women; and he was wont to boast that with half an hour's start he was not afraid of the handsomest man in England.

What happened to Wilkes in Italy, and how he conducted himself at Naples and elsewhere, do not concern us; it is only necessary to note that he was not entirely occupied with his struggle for English freedom, and that he solaced his own afflictions with a form of liberty that suited him best.

Meanwhile, the House of Commons ordered him to attend and answer the charge of having published a libel. Wilkes had sent a medical certificate to say he was unfit to travel. Parliament was obdurate; he was required to present himself on January 19th, 1764; and he failed to appear. He was voted guilty, and he was expelled from his Membership of Parliament.

Next month (February 21st) his case came before the Court of King's Bench, and he was

¹ *History of the Four Georges*, Justin McCarthy, iii. 96.

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found guilty of having published No. 45 and the 'Essay on Woman.' It was alleged against the judge, Lord Mansfield, that he had improperly altered the record: but nothing would do. Sentence was passed and Wilkes was given time to submit himself: but he never came, and the full penalty was enacted. He was declared an outlaw; and for the next four years the peace of England was to be disturbed by him no more.

The eclipse was not, indeed, to be total. Wilkes soon wearied of his idle life: now and always he had a sharp eye for a point of vantage, and he had a most intrepid spirit. His treatment by Government in 1763 had been so far condemned as to furnish him with a grievance. Founding his claim on this, he set up a demand for a free pardon, compensation in money, and a pension on the Irish Establishment; which was perhaps unbecoming on the part of the foe of injustice and oppression. And he was still open to an offer of the Embassy at Constantinople. But Lord Rockingham was now in power, and Lord Rockingham, with all his Liberal principles, was not prepared to take up Wilkes's cause against the will of the Court. The outlaw paid a visit to London, where nobody seemed disposed to meddle with him, even if they were not prepared to help him; and he returned to Paris no better or worse off than before.

Rockingham fell (July 1766) and Grafton became Minister. Here was an old friend in office, and Wilkes felt his spirits rising. He

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declared that Grafton's brother, Colonel Fitzroy, had called on him in Paris to offer terms, and that he had every reason to expect a happy ending to his troubles; but when he ventured on another visit to London he found nothing but disappointment awaiting him. It is true that nobody cared to lay hands on him; but his friend in office was no more inclined to be his champion than Rockingham had been. The Duke referred him to Chatham. Now Chatham in the debates of 1763-4 had utterly forsaken his former adherent, and had said most evil things of No. 45. Wilkes was not going to call on Chatham. The consequence was that he had to retire again and prepare for a bolder spring.

In March 1768 came a general election, and with it came Wilkes. He began by addressing an appeal for clemency to the King to which, it may be believed, no answer was vouchsafed. Then, in spite of the fact that his fame and popularity were nearly forgotten; that he could reckon on no strong body of support; that, furthermore, he was under sentence for libel and blasphemy, and was, as an outlaw, supposed not to exist, he determined to stand for Parliament in the City of London.

That he had some friends, and that his influence was not entirely extinct, is, indeed, revealed by a sentence in a letter from North to his father, dated October 1767:

‘I do not conceive that Mr. Wilkes ever had any serious thoughts of offering himself a candidate for London, but his friends took every

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opportunity of bringing him on the stage for fear he should be forgotten.'

This is not easy to reconcile with the general opinion that his action was utterly reckless and even unpremeditated. Mr. Fitzgerald says that

'after his appeal for pardon had been ignored (by the King) he conceived the daring scheme of offering himself as a candidate for the City of London.'¹

With or without premeditation, he stood, and found himself at the bottom of the poll. North did not yet know his Wilkes; he had still to learn the aspiring audacity of this strange being.

The defeat in the City did nothing but stimulate Wilkes to action still more defiant. He presented himself for election in the County of Middlesex, and before the end of the month he was returned at the head of the poll. As the sun emerging from behind a cloud, or as a familiar planet reappearing above the horizon, so Wilkes in a moment stood forth with all his lustre restored and replenished. Memories are short in politics, and probably not many of the multitude that hailed their champion had any distinct recollection of the newspaper article that had been the origin of his troubles; but a good cry counts for much, though it signifies little. 'No. 45' was the war-cry of the Wilkites, coupled with the sentiment of 'Wilkes and Liberty.' The road to Brentford,

¹ i. 325.

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where the election was held, became the scene of a kind of guerilla warfare. In the west end of London not a carriage was allowed to pass without the sacred number inscribed on its panels ; not a lady but was forced to cry aloud for 'Wilkes and Liberty.' The Ambassador of the stateliest of the Nations suffered the indignity of being held captive whilst 'No. 45' was chalked upon the soles of his shoes—an outrage which he was perhaps wise enough not to report to his mistress in Vienna. The houses of the great that were left unillumined at night were set upon and wrecked.

We must pause a moment to note that one of Wilkes's most stalwart supporters was the Rev. John Horne of Brentford. He was the son of a poulterer, who had contrived to send him to Eton and Cambridge, and had persuaded him with difficulty to take holy orders. Horne had met Wilkes during a tour as a private tutor in France, and had fallen under the spell. He was now his enthusiastic ally ; but the flower of friendship with Wilkes carried poison in its root, and 'lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.' Wilkes had an evil habit of quarrelling sooner or later with all his friends, and with none did he quarrel more bitterly than with Horne. But for the moment they were friends.

Horne's figure must not be left out of the picture, because it has forced its way into the background of history. Having relinquished his living in disgust, he flung himself into politics and

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returned to his first love, the Bar. His public spirit won him the favour of Mr. Tooke of Purley, greatly to his private advantage. Hence the adoption of a second name, and the production of the *Diversions of Purley*, a book which had sufficient merit to outlast its hour. Horne Tooke was quick-witted enough to engage in conflict with Junius without disgrace; he was so uncompromising as to open a public subscription for his 'American fellow-subjects barbarously murdered at Lexington'; but he was not in the end as successful as Wilkes. The Bar rejected him because he was a clergyman. He had to stand a trial for high treason, and from this he escaped; but he had already been in prison for libelling the Speaker; and when, after some defeats, he finally secured a seat in Parliament, a special Act was passed to turn him out.¹ He was a turbulent spirit, and perhaps served Wilkes best by being something in the nature of his inferior counterpart. To have done with him, we can give this sketch from the note-book of a later day gossip, Creevey:

'Tooke evidently came prepared for a display, and as I had met him repeatedly and considered his powers of conversation as surpassing those of any person I had ever seen in point of skill and dexterity (and, if at all necessary, in lying), I took for granted old grumbling Thurlow would be obliged to lower his topsail to him. But it seemed as if the very look and voice of Thurlow scared him out of his senses, and certainly

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

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nothing could be much more formidable. So Tooke tried to recruit himself by wine, and though not a drinker, was very drunk. But all would not do; and he was perpetually trying to distinguish himself, and Thurlow constantly laughing at him.’¹

Wilkes meanwhile had decided to square his account with the law, and had announced that he would surrender himself at the opening of the ensuing term. It was presumably by this act of submission that he was enabled to go through his election unmolested. Some there were who thought that the wisest policy was to grant him a free pardon and strip him at once of his grievance and his dignity: but inflexibly opposed to any lenient course was the resolute spirit of the King. To North, whom probably he regarded as his most sympathetic and reliable lieutenant in the House of Commons, even if Conway were nominal manager, he wrote that ‘the expulsion of Mr. Wilkes appears to be very essential and must be effected.’

On April 20th, 1768, Wilkes appeared before Lord Mansfield at the Court of King’s Bench, and the technical forms apposite to his case were so perplexing that an adjournment of a week was found to be necessary. On the 27th he came up again and the legal aspect of the outlawry was argued at length. Lord Mansfield reserved his judgment and refused to let Wilkes out on bail;

¹ *Creevey’s Journals*, i. 60.

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he remained in prison until June 8th. Then Mansfield declared that on a point of law the sentence of outlawry itself was illegal; but that Wilkes had not yet expiated his offence in respect of No. 45 and the 'Essay on Woman.' He must come up for judgment on these charges in ten days' time. On the 18th, therefore, Wilkes appeared for the fourth time, and heard himself sentenced to twenty-two months' imprisonment and a fine of 1000*l*. When he left the Court, the mob, to mark their disapproval, seized upon his person and set him free; but Wilkes, who was bent upon obedience for the moment, confounded their good intentions and made glad the heart of his gaoler by giving himself into custody in the course of the evening.

It is conceivable that Wilkes was glad of a temporary refuge. He had raised a whirlwind and he was not sure whither it would carry him. It has been said already that the year 1768 was one of much disturbance and distress, and all those who had a grievance turned to the cause of Wilkes as to a Cave of Adullam. Parliament had met on May 10th, and when it was found that Wilkes was not to have liberty to attend, the spirit of riot broke forth at once. Then Weymouth, Secretary of State, issued orders to the civil authorities that they need not scruple to employ troops, and that the troops need not hesitate to shoot. There was a turmoil in St. George's Fields: a battalion was dispatched to

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put it down, and unhappily it was a battalion of detested Scotchmen. Shots were fired, and a youth named Allen, who was an innocent and unlucky resident, fell dead.

Wilkes held good cards, as he always did; he could sit at ease in his prison and scourge his oppressors with manifestoes. He was able to proclaim at large that he had been unjustly and unlawfully dealt with in the case of general warrants, the raid on his property, and his outlawry: next, having obtained a copy of Weymouth's letter, he proceeded to arraign the Secretary of State without fear or scruple. He contrived to make it known that all the cost of his prosecution was to come out of the pocket of the taxpayers, and that the general warrants and their consequences had already cost them upwards of 100,000*l*. He saw the necessity of purging his offence against authority, but he was not going to let sleeping dogs lie; and once more he only took a retrograde step with a view to leaping amongst them the more nimbly when the moment should be propitious. So many and formidable, indeed, were his resources for raising the hungry pack about his heels, that it was the observation of Franklin that had King George exhibited an evil character and Wilkes a good one, the throne would have fallen. This may be an exaggeration, but the King was undoubtedly alarmed. The signs of the times were ominous, and in Wilkes he saw them concentrated and flaunted forth.

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The Government were not unanimous. Camden and Conway led a pro-Wilkes party. But North was faithful to the King, and when Mr. Martin moved in the House of Commons that though Wilkes had published a seditious libel, he was not thereby disqualified from sitting, North adroitly added the words that he had ‘also been found guilty of publishing an obscene and impious libel, for which he had been sentenced to prison,’ which nobody could deny.

Wilkes was ready for his next move. He determined to bring his grievances before Parliament and petition for redress. In the forefront of his complaints he placed the unjust sentence of outlawry in 1764, and the bribery and corruption of witnesses by Treasury officials. The Duke of Grafton was disposed to make terms on the basis of no petition, no further exclusion from Parliament;¹ but he was not in a position to bargain: the battle had to be fought out. The House of Commons listened to Wilkes’s accusations and dismissed them; then he became defendant, and was taxed with his publications against Lord Weymouth. He avowed authorship; and for this offence, in addition to his former libels, the House voted his expulsion and ordered the issue of a new writ for an election for the County of Middlesex. During these debates Grenville defended Wilkes with such contemptuous patronage, and damned him with such faint praise, that Wilkes in his rage published

¹ Fitzgerald, ii. 23.

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a fierce recrimination. Temple endeavoured to dissuade him, in vain ; and Wilkes quarrelled with another friend, one to whom he was deeply indebted for acts of kindness and, it was supposed, gifts of money as well.

Now the action of the play moved rapidly. Wilkes had been expelled on February 3rd, 1769. Although he was still in prison he was re-elected without opposition : and the House again voted his expulsion. A third election was ordered and a candidate was produced in the person of the 'miserable Dingley,' as Junius called him. But Dingley made no fight, and Wilkes was returned triumphantly.

In the course of these exciting struggles Wilkes issued an address to the electors, in which he argued that

'if once the Ministry should be permitted to say whom the freeholders shall not choose, the next step will be to tell them whom they shall choose,'

which proved to be an uncommonly shrewd forecast. A fourth election was ordered, and the Government found a champion in Colonel Luttrell. He did better, for he polled three hundred votes. He was defeated by eight hundred, but the House saw no impediment in that, and they declared the Colonel to be duly elected. It was his sister, Mrs. Horton, who two years later married the Duke of Cumberland, to the lasting indignation of the King ; but for the moment Luttrell was a name of good omen at Court. Alderman Townshend, on

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the contrary, deemed the transaction so immoral that he became the forerunner of all passive resisters; he allowed his household goods to be seized rather than pay land tax, on the ground that the county was not legally represented in Parliament.

So Wilkes lay in prison, and Luttrell sat for Middlesex in his stead. But it was not a barren year for Wilkes. In January he had been elected an Alderman in the City. In the autumn he brought his six-year-old feud with Halifax to a happy issue, and obtained a verdict with 4000*l.* damages. Beyond this, his City friends, spurred on by Horne, formed a kind of Wilkes Syndicate, with the object of paying his debts. The Mayor and Corporation more than once invaded the Palace to remonstrate with the King; and finally Lord Mayor Beckford violated all precedent and decorum by capping the royal reply with a few plain words that were not upon the programme. Chatham had returned to political life, full of bitterness against the Government, and ready, therefore, to protect Wilkes now as he had denounced him in 1763.

On April 17th, 1770, the term of Wilkes's imprisonment expired, and he found himself in no bad way. He was no longer an outlaw; he was quit of the Judges; his debts were paid; he was an Alderman in possession, and a Member of Parliament in expectation; and he was the most popular man in the country. Had he but known it he was

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destined to pass into history as the originating cause of Radicalism and platform oratory.¹

It is not necessary to enter here upon an examination of the Wilkes case from a constitutional point of view ; let it suffice to tell as plainly as may be the story as it goes. Next year, 1771, Wilkes, who had a sense of humour, must have enjoyed his opportunity. Parliament made its last attempt to stifle the publication of debates. Colonel George Onslow brought on the crisis by complaining, not without cause, that he had been grossly misrepresented and disparaged. Parliament resolved to arrest divers printers and publishers ; and Woodfall, the ablest and best-known reporter, was safely got into prison. But others took refuge behind the privileges of the City of London. Two were arrested by collusion and brought before Wilkes and Oliver. They were dismissed ; their captors were threatened with imprisonment ; and Wilkes, as Alderman, sat down to write to the Secretary of State a letter of remonstrance and reproof. Then one Miller was arrested by an officer of the House of Commons and brought before the Lord Mayor, Wilkes, and Oliver. Miller was set at liberty and the messenger was made prisoner instead, notwithstanding the protest of the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. He was, however, let out on bail.

Next followed a series of scenes in which the House of Commons managed to put itself more in

¹ Jephson : *The Platform*, cit. ; Lecky, iii. 372.

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the wrong than ever, and from which Wilkes emerged with all the applause. The Lord Mayor and Oliver, who were members, were ordered to attend in their places; Wilkes was ordered to present himself at the bar, an injunction which he was careful to disobey. After a display of muddle and ineptitude, which need not be detailed, the House stood on its dignity as well as it could, and sent the Lord Mayor and Oliver to the Tower. Wilkes was again ordered to attend, but he protested that he would come as a member or not at all; and he kept his word. A third time he was summoned—for the 8th of April; then the House put the finishing touch to the absurdity of its position by adjourning until the 9th.

North had a nasty business in hand. He was no friend of Wilkes, but there were many who were; and whilst some of these reviled North in Parliament, those of the baser sort attacked him in the street with mud and stones, and did him grievous bodily harm.

The King meanwhile took a curious line of counsel:

‘The authority of the House of Commons is totally annihilated,’ he wrote to North on March 17th, ‘if it is not in an exemplary manner supported to-morrow by instantly committing the Lord Mayor and Alderman Oliver to the Tower; as for Wilkes, he is below the notice of the House’—

a point of philosophy which might well have been

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borrowed from Shakespeare's 'sad stuff,' as he called it :

‘ Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go ; and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.’

Next day he wrote to North that ‘ all was going admirably . . . go on with resolution, and this affair will be happily concluded.’ And when the episode was ended he wrote, ‘ I will have nothing more to do with that devil Wilkes.’ At the end of the Session the prisoners became free automatically. From that day reporting in Parliament became one of our national institutions ; and again Wilkes could boast that he had had something to do with its establishment.

Even the indomitable King seemed to be awed by the ingenuity and audacity of Wilkes. Still the fight went on. Next year Wilkes was candidate for the office of Sheriff in opposition to Plumbe and Kirkman, who were Conservatives.

‘ Lord North,’ wrote the King, ‘ the two senior Aldermen appear now to have a fair prospect of succeeding. I trust no zeal will be wanting that their success may be as brilliant as possible, the more so as it will unveil what has certainly been all along the fact, that Wilkes has been in his various struggles supported *by a small though desperate part* of the Livery, whilst the sober and major part of that body have from fear kept aloof.’

But Wilkes was elected. This success he followed up by aspiring to election as Lord Mayor. The King's horror of Wilkes and his belief that he

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represented the rebellious rabble, are revealed in this letter :

‘ Lord North : I trust by your account of this day’s poll that there can be no doubt that it will end favourably ; the mob being less quiet this day is a proof that from *riot*, not numbers, *the patriots* alone can draw support. . . . Wilkes is not bound by any ties, therefore would poll more freemen rather than lose the election ; if he is not one of the two returned [for selection] he is lost for ever.’

Wilkes was returned at the head of the poll, but his old friend and colleague Oliver, by a subtle electioneering device, secured the nomination by the Court of Aldermen of the beaten candidate, Townshend. For, now, alas, all Wilkes’s friends had become his foes. We have seen that he fell out with his early political friends in turn—Grenville, Chatham, Temple. Now his most malignant enemy was Horne, whose hatred arose out of vanity and jealousy. In this quarrel Junius took part, on the side of Wilkes ; and although Horne was not to be reduced to silence, such a famous advocate was as welcome as he was, perhaps, unexpected. But the City fathers went with Horne—Sawbridge, Oliver, Townshend—all the Wilkites. The respective cases need not be stated at length. It will not put the situation unfairly if we say that Wilkes, in his pride, wanted to ‘run’ the syndicate, whereas the syndicate wanted to ‘run’ him.

He was to have one more passage with the

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House of Commons before he could boast of victory. In 1773 a 'call of the House' was ordered and the Sheriffs were ordered to issue writs to the members. Naturally enough Wilkes presented himself in response to a summons issuing through such a channel; and the House, at a disadvantage as usual, could only elude their terrible persecutor by a hurried manipulation of the order paper. And for the King he feathered another shaft by proposing that a dutiful address from the City should be presented on the birth of a child to the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, knowing well enough that their marriage had caused a scandal at Court, and that they languished outside the pale. But the Corporation lacked his sense of humour and his recklessness, and they refrained. Whether the members of the Corporation were entirely destitute of humour may, however, be doubted. When they waited on the King to congratulate him on the birth of a son of his own, neither Sheriff would kiss his hand, one of them giving as his excuse that he never kissed any hand but a woman's.¹

In 1774 came the turn of the tide. Wilkes was re-elected for Middlesex. No attempt was made to keep him out and he was allowed to take his seat without demur. And he became Lord Mayor of London. Sir George Trevelyan may be believed when he declares that 'no minister cared to have Wilkes and America on his hands at the

¹ Walpole : *Last Journals*, i. 327.

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same time.' Lord North saw the tide of American trouble rising round him and he had no time to be wrestling with a turbulent and irrepressible agitator. Like the King, he would have 'nothing more to do with that devil Wilkes.'

In addition to the elements in public life which we have said were first aroused by Wilkes, he may now be credited with having rearranged the party system. According to the editor of Lord Rockingham's memoirs, the contests that were waged in the City during the years 1772-4 had this important result: 'that the Whigs and what are now called the Radicals became two distinct sections of the Liberal Party.'¹ But his influence, memorable as it was, was mainly indirect. He had, indeed, made a considerable impression upon the House of Commons before he was allowed to take his seat in it: thereafter he made none at all. The formidable demagogue became first a silent and insignificant member, and presently a champion of law and order, a courtier, and something like a Tory. During the Gordon Riots in 1780 he not only gave energetic assistance towards the restoring of peace: as a magistrate he actually issued what amounted to a general warrant for the seeking and arresting of disorderly persons; which was perhaps his highest achievement as a humourist.

In his capacity as Lord Mayor he had to present a petition to the King against the

¹ *Memoirs*, ii. 209.

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American policy of the Government, and it must have been profound amazement that made the monarch blurt out that he had never seen so well-bred a Lord Mayor. To which confession may be added the testimony of Lord Mansfield that 'Wilkes was the most perfect gentleman he had ever seen.' The King seems to have grown quite fond of the 'devil who had been below the notice of the House.' Once at Court his Majesty inquired after Wilkes's 'old friend Glynn.' 'My friend, Sir?' exclaimed Wilkes unabashed: 'he is no friend of mine. He was a Wilkite: I never was.' And when the Prince of Wales asked him how long he had been such a loyal subject, he replied with terrible sarcasm in courtly guise: 'Ever since I have known your royal highness.'

In 1782 Wilkes enjoyed the great triumph of his life. After many years of obstinate refusal the House of Commons voted by 115 to 47 that all records of his blasphemous and obscene libels, and of his expulsion, be expunged from the journals of Parliament; and expunged they accordingly were. Against Lord North he displayed no resentment; but when the rearrangement of parties took place in 1782-3 Wilkes chose his part with Pitt. Whether this was because he had not forgotten that North and Fox had been leagued together against him in the early seventies, or because he preferred what was now the more Tory party we need not stay to enquire. At the general election of 1784 he 'swept Middlesex by a large majority

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—for the Crown.’¹ Such changes had time wrought. But he subsided into complete obscurity, and in 1790 he left public life for ever. He had long had a fondness for certain forms of domestic life and country quiet ; and in the enjoyment of these he lived on until 1797, dying at the age of seventy. Few men in the face of so many rebuffs and hindrances have succeeded in planting their feet so firmly within the goal of their ambition ; and if he did nothing of great merit and renown, save by accident, in the service of his country, he undoubtedly did as much as any Englishman of his day to exasperate and confound the governments of which Lord North was a member.

¹ *William Pitt*, J. H. Rose, 165.

CHAPTER V

GEORGE III

LORD NORTH was Prime Minister, although he repudiated the title, from 1770 to 1782, and during those years he lived in closer intimacy and warmer favour with George III. than any that came before or after him. It is necessary therefore to have before us a definite idea of the King.

The verdict of the jury of historians comes near to condemnation ; but one or two have taken a stand in his favour. Nobody has written with more gravity and more honourable seeking after truth and justice than Mr. Lecky, and this is the conclusion to which he has been brought :

‘ George III. is the last instance of an English Sovereign endeavouring systematically to impose his individual opinion upon the nation and in a great degree succeeding in his attempt. . . . Ignorant, narrow-minded, arbitrary . . . he spent a long life in obstinately resisting measures which are now almost universally admitted to be good, and in supporting measures which are as universally admitted to be bad.’

And he complains that he left debts of nearly



Painted by J. Tassie

Engraved by W. B. Marshall

King George III.

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Painted by J. Zoffany.

Engraved by R. Houston.

King George III.

GEORGE III

3,400,000*l.* notwithstanding that he had inherited the large savings of George II. and had an income of nearly one million of his own. His conduct in refusing to have anything to do with the Opposition, and clinging to his Ministers who were committed to a war policy, when all hope of victory was gone, he declares to be 'as criminal as any of those acts which led Charles I. to the scaffold.'¹ Sir William Anson is little less severe :

'The capacity of George III.', says he, 'did not extend beyond the arts of obtaining power: our history can hardly produce a Sovereign less capable of governing an Empire.'

And he neither doubts nor condones the King's treacherous habit of inducing his Ministers to talk freely in order that he might, by mischievous repetition, sow dissension amongst them.² Sir George Trevelyan approves this estimate of his capacity for governing as 'correct in all particulars'; but he does not write him down a fool: 'Whatever words his advisers put into his mouth,' he says, 'George III. understood more fully and much sooner than any of them the reality which he and they had to face.'³ The biographer of Alexander Hamilton takes a view of similar balance: ⁴

'It is but due to his memory,' says Mr. Oliver, 'to recognise that although the beginnings of the

¹ *History*, iii. 166-172; iv. 458.

² *Memoirs of Duke of Grafton*, xiv., xxi.

³ *American Revolution*, ii. 11, 69.

⁴ *The Life of Alexander Hamilton*, by F. S. Oliver, 66.

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quarrel [with America] may have been owing in great measure to his defects of judgment and of temper, he stood alone among his ministers and almost alone among his subjects in possession of that spirit and pride of duty that made the strength of Washington and his ragged army.'

It remains for the latest and not the least accomplished of his critics to place King George in the front rank of sovereigns and of statesmen. It is Mr. John Fortescue's deliberate opinion that he was 'the only Sovereign who could be named with Catharine for character and ability.'¹ Not even the King's most savage detractors will pretend that there was any resemblance in the moral characters of the two Sovereigns: consequently this is a purely flattering comparison. 'His resolve was to govern,' says another authority, 'not to govern against law, but simply to govern.'² Lord Stanhope says he was 'most truly and emphatically an honest man.'³

From the Whig historians one can expect little praise. Neither Lord Russell nor Sir George Trevelyan can be expected to hold a brief for the King against their idol, Charles Fox. Without unduly adding to the list, we may include Macaulay's estimate. He says that the young King had

'received from nature a strong will, a firmness of temper to which a harsher name might perhaps

¹ *British Statesmen of the Great War*, by the Hon. John Fortescue, 82.

² J. R. Green, *Short History*, 761.

³ *History*, iv. 310.

GEORGE III

be given, and an understanding not, indeed, acute or enlarged, but such as qualified him to be a good man of business.'

As time went on, he says, self-confidence brought high notions of prerogative and impatience of opposition. Hence there came into existence a 'reptile species of politicians never before and never since known in this country,' called the King's friends. With this obedient band at his command he was able to discredit and embarrass by his secret instructions the ministers whom he was forced to honour with his public approbation. The agents, however, receive the greater condemnation, and the master gets off more easily than we should expect.¹

Contemporary opinions must be discounted for the play of political sympathies. Junius need not be quoted. One naturally turns to Horace Walpole, who assumed the character of an impartial observer :

'I see the country going to ruin, and no man with brains enough to save it,' he wrote in 1768. 'I seldom suffer myself to think on this subject: *my* patriotism could do no good, and my philosophy can make me be at peace';

which reveals a temperament rather candid than robust. But with all his candour we must not take him as a very safe commentator. He was a consummate dilettante. He cultivated with unmatched success the art of letter-writing, now

¹ *Essays*, iv. 271.

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unhappily extinct. He was inquisitive, communicative, and a first-rate gossip; but his character did not qualify him for the work of an historian. He posed; and he cared nothing for consistency. He professed a great love of liberty and spoke of himself as 'a man almost a republican'¹; yet he wrote in sorrow of the old county families of Norfolk that had been 'rooted out' and forced to sell their estates by the weight of taxes, and by the 'ruinous expense of contesting their elections against upstarts who had risen to sudden fortunes.' He pompously declared that 'the ultimate end of the contentions of the great is to oppress the people'; yet in his own and his brothers' sinecure offices he saw only a natural dispensation and an inviolable right. He reported that Fox 'displayed astonishing parts on the Revenue': and Fox never pretended to understand finance. He was often inaccurate: one day he records that Lord Cornwallis has arrived, and three weeks later mentions incidentally that he has not. A little later he confesses that 'age and indolence have unfitted me for taking pains to inform myself.' And he is subject to the prejudices of an effeminate nature. Conway is his friend, and his judgments on other men are formed in accordance with their relation to Conway. But his most lively feelings were reserved for the case of his niece. The Duke of Gloucester had married the widow of Lord Waldegrave, natural daughter of Walpole's elder

¹ *Last Journals*, ii. 260.

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brother, Sir Edward. The Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester were both in disgrace for having married without the King's consent, and Horace Walpole appropriated his share of the quarrel, with as much zest as if royal station and favour were the first necessities of life, and without any of the complacency of a republican. At the outset, indeed, he was disposed to praise: the new King had 'much dignity and extreme good nature.' But his good opinion was not to endure. On the death of Lord Waldegrave, who had once been the King's governor, Walpole wrote to Montagu:

'I have heard but of one man, who ought to have known his worth, that has shown no concern; but I suppose his childish mind is too much occupied with the loss of his last governor' (Bute). 'I knew the King's pusillanimity,' he writes once: and again, 'Sense and virtue might awe him, but were sure of his aversion':

and in the case of a court scandal, where he ought surely to have shunned inaccuracies, he puts a false and unfair interpretation upon the King's action. He accuses his Sovereign of conniving at the bigamous marriage of the Duchess of Kingston with Augustus Hervey, afterwards Earl of Bristol. Nothing could have been less like the King; and as a matter of fact the lady was free from her first husband before she married again.

But nothing would do; when the King went

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to Portsmouth to inspire his fleet with energy and courage, Walpole sneers at his 'puppet show.' He even reveals an inclination to assume that justice must of course be on the side of the Prince of Wales in his first quarrels with his father. Yet, with his usual inconsistency, he suddenly turns his wrath against the Queen, accusing her of preventing a reconciliation between the King and his brother Gloucester; and he even tells his friend, Mr. Cole, that he thinks the King would be willing to help in getting published a proposed History of Gothic Architecture, which to the writer must have been a sign of grace indeed.

This much has been said because Horace Walpole is the best-known and most freely quoted authority upon the period under review: his *obiter dicta* cannot be ignored; but a hint should be given that they need weighing and sifting.

When we set about forming our own estimate of King George we have one test of great value. His letters to Lord North lie before us;¹ and they are so obviously the unpremeditated exclamations of the writer, that they reveal him to our eyes as nature made him. And here we have to lament a loss which is much more than an inconvenience to the biographer of Lord North. When Lord Brougham was composing his *Historical Sketches*, he borrowed from North's family all the letters

¹ *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, W. Bodham Donne.

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that had been written by the Prime Minister to the King. By some unhappy accident they were mislaid, and they have never been recovered. Thus we listen, as it were, to one speaking at a telephone, and have to guess, as best we may, what answers he is receiving. Could we but read the lost letters of Lord North, we should know a great deal more than we do now of the conduct by Government of the war in America; and, to be sure, a great deal more of Lord North himself.

A perusal of the King's letters leaves upon the mind one notable and melancholy impression. It must be remembered that as early as 1765 he had been attacked by a malady which gave warning of the brain disease that was to recur, and finally to plunge him into darkness and desolation. It was on his recovery then that the Regency Bill was passed to provide for a similar and perhaps enduring visitation. It was not until more than twenty years later that a regency was nearly a necessity; and forty-five years passed away before the functions of sovereignty were actually entrusted to his son. Yet when one reads these letters, one is tempted to think that as early as 1770 the King's mind was tainted with insanity. And here we cannot refrain from observing that three of the most conspicuous figures in this passage of history were insane. Lord Fitzmaurice is able to quote the opinion of an eminent London physician that Chatham suffered at times from

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decided insanity.¹ Lord Morley speaks of Burke as 'half mad.'² Walter Bagehot says he was afflicted 'at all times with the intense irritability of genius, in later years with the extreme one-sidedness of insanity': and to the King he attributes 'an eager obstinacy allied to the obstinacy of insanity,'³ which reminds one of Lord Townshend's shrewd comment when the King was forced to receive Fox in 1783: 'He turned back his ears and eyes just like the horse at Astley's when the tailor he had determined to throw was getting on him.'

How far Chatham and Burke were mad in a technical sense need not be debated: that King George was in the end utterly insane is a fact. This calamity has been attributed to an excessive devotion to the simple life. He was terrified by the corpulence of his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland: he believed that obesity was in the blood of the family, and he was determined to avoid it by abstinence and bodily exercise. The consequence was, according to this theory, that his constitution was undermined, and finally came down in mental collapse. Lord Russell says that his madness was due to a 'scrofulous habit, driven from the feet to the head by too violent exercise, too rigid abstinence, and too little repose.'

In the years before he became King we have to deal with a shadowy figure. George III. was

¹ Sir Andrew Clark: *Life of Shelburne*, i. 332.

² *Burke*, by John Morley, 140.

³ *Biographical Studies*.

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spared half the evil habit, which certainly did run in his family, of quarrelling with father and son. He was born in 1738 and was only thirteen when his father died. Frederick, Prince of Wales, had hated his father only as his father had hated him. He was not a fine character, but he was not a bad man ; and he was encouraged to make the worst of himself. He only quarrelled with his father ; George III. only quarrelled with his son.

The Princess of Wales, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, had had a most detestable part to play : she was at once the partner and the victim of her husband's plots for annoying his parents. Yet she was an object of their pity rather than their anger ; and after Frederick's death, old George II. showed no disposition to visit the sins of the father on the widow or her son. The Princess had not shown much capacity for managing her husband. From him, indeed, George III. may well have inherited his obstinacy, But she was a woman of ambition and a firm mind, and if she had been willing that Frederick should be her master, she was determined that George should be nobody's slave. She was none the less strict with him at home. ' The mother and the nursery always prevailed,' said Lord Waldegrave. Years afterwards, in objecting to some household appointments, the King wrote : ' I do not chuse to fill my family with professed gamesters ' ; his mother had set her face against the card-playing that George II. had loved. She certainly succeeded in establishing sound and

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lasting moral principles : George was as God-fearing and clean-living as any king in history. And she used her power tactfully. Walpole, in his early spirit of praise, declared that ‘no petticoat ever governed less.’

We have seen that in 1751 North and Dartmouth met at the Hague a young princess whom rumour gave to Prince George. She was then eight, and Dartmouth doubted whether he would wait for her. He did wait ten years for a wife. There was a story of his having secretly married a Quakeress in his youth ; and there is the pleasant legend of his making pastoral love to Lady Sarah Lennox through the railings of Holland House, after he was on the throne ; but in 1761 he married Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who may or may not have been the maiden of the Hague. A most admirable wife she proved herself to be. Either from lack of humour, or to chasten himself, or to humble Lady Sarah’s pride, George appointed her to be one of the bridesmaids. She had not handled her dazzling prospects with any skill. They must have proved themselves elusive in any case, but she let them slip through her fingers quickly. With the King duty prevailed over inclination, and there were no broken hearts on either side.

So far George’s life had been singularly uneventful. He had small learning. His tutors, of whom one or two, oddly enough, were Jacobites, had influenced him little : they found him unresponsive and reserved. He knew nothing of the

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world and the world knew nothing of him. But he knew the value of the world's good opinion. 'Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton,' he said in his first speech to Parliament; and they would have liked him even better if he had substituted the word 'Englishman.' How far Bute was responsible for this and for other things we will enquire later. The untried prince asserted his sovereignty at once. Even Chatham, in all his glory, had to reckon with a new power in the State. Bute was enabled to carry out his peace policy, and the Princess-mother uttered what may have been her *nunc dimittis*—'Now my son is King of England.'

By the time George III. began his correspondence with Lord North, as Prime Minister, he had had plenty of experience in kingship. In ten years there had been five ministries—under Newcastle, Bute, Grenville, Rockingham, and Grafton. The chapter of European war had been closed with the Peace of Paris. A new and dismal chapter had been opened with Grenville's Stamp Act and Townshend's import duties in America. Wilkes had been stirring up strife. It had not been a period of repose. The writer of the letters was no longer a reserved youth whom nobody knew much about. He was an extremely energetic man, who was known of all men. The two most conspicuous features of his style as a correspondent present something like a paradox: meticulous attention to detail is mixed with a feverish haste.

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He had no regard for grammar or punctuation, and he allowed himself the full licence of the age in rules of spelling. 'Loosing' for losing, 'feesible,' 'cirrounds,' 'emanuenses,' 'discreSSION,' are words taken at random; and to save time he seldom employs the double consonant—'tranquility' is near enough for him. He writes plainly enough; he knows what he wants to say and he seldom fails to make his meaning clear; but occasionally, as in his letter of January 10th, 1779, he rushes on so impetuously that one interminable sentence has no measure and no meaning; like the scream of a man beside himself.

On the other hand, he was precise to the point of eccentricity. He dated all his letters with the hour and the minute; and his industry and impatience are revealed in such early and late replies as these: 'March 20 1770 50 min pt 6 am'; and 'May 8 1770 48 min pt m[idnight].' He would begin 'Lord North,' or to mark his favour, 'My dear Lord,' or would plunge *in medias res* without the ceremony of address. It would be fantastic to construct a theory of insanity on such slender evidence as this; yet it is worth while observing that even at the age of thirty-two there was in his manner a fussiness and hurry which do not belong to a well-balanced mind.

A madman is usually either a spendthrift or a miser. George was neither of these. His grandfather had been so economical that he would irritate the maids of honour by continually check-

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ing the quantity of coppers in his breeches pocket ; and when he gave the Queen a pair of carriage horses, he contrived that she should pay for the keep whilst he enjoyed the use. George III. was by nature a sound and methodical man of business. When he wished to buy a horse from John Spencer, of Cannon Hall, a message came that the owner had refused 170*l.* for it, but would be happy to present it to his Majesty.¹ Without wasting words the King sent for the animal, enclosing an order for 170*l.*, neither more nor less. It is true that he accumulated large amounts of debt, as Mr. Lecky says ; but he was a politician before all things, and the system that had been in full operation under Sir Robert Walpole and Newcastle, and had found its final expression in Henry Fox, was not to be stamped out by George III. and Lord North. Wraxall says that ‘ North governed by loans, jobs, and contracts : Pitt by peerages.’ Government could not flourish without a fertilising stream from the King’s privy purse. This was accordingly turned on ; neither sparingly, nor yet without careful check upon waste. Moreover, the royal household was involved in the same costly system. In a debate on the Civil List in 1779 Shelburne was said to have been ‘ very violent and very personal to the King’ ; and truly there were some items on which an economist might comment with warranted asperity. One individual,

¹ *Annals of a Yorkshire House*, i. 343.

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whose services were presumably of use outside his office, drew a salary as a taster of rum. It turned out that the turnspit of His Majesty's kitchen was a member of Parliament. Sinécure posts were in abundance. In such a condition of things there could be no pretence of order ; and some person or persons besides the royal tradesmen were doubtless the better for an annual charge of 10,000*l.* for candles. To all protests the King replied that he could do as he pleased with his own civil list. Next year Dunning carried a resolution declaring that the House of Commons had the right to examine the uses to which the money they had granted was being put. Had they done so, they might all have become 'very violent and very personal.' In one letter dated '25 min past 6 am' the King makes a note that between 1769 and 1777 Martin, of the Treasury, has spent 285,000*l.* on secret service.

When the King of Sweden died in 1771, George III. writes to North that he sees no advantage in continuing to pay a subsidy to his successor :

'Besides as there is no public mode of obtaining the money . . . it must be taken from my civil list, consequently new debt incurred ; and when I apply to Parliament for relieving me, an odium cast on me myself and ministry, as if the money had been expended on bribing Parliament.'

Again he writes :

'If the D. of Northumberland requires some

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gold pills for the election, it would be wrong not to give him some assistance.'

How exact in all his dealings the King was apt to be, we may gather from this letter when Lord North was out of office and out of favour, May 5th, 1782 :

'The shortest and clearest method I can devise of closing the account of the secret service money with L^d North is to allow him to state the 3938*l.* 8*s.* 11*d.* which he did not receive of the 20000*l.* I gave him leave to take for the discharge of his debts, which is ballanced by his paying for an article that never was stated to me, and therefore for which I cannot stand indebted—the 3250*l.* to that worthless man Mr. Bate¹; which sum, with the remaining money in L^d North's hands, 712*l.* 14*s.* 4½*d.* will give L^d North a clear claim to a ballance in his favour of 20*l.* 5*s.* and 6½*d.* which I therefore enclose.'²

Of his careful attention to business we have additional evidence in one of the few surviving letters from Lord North. After the resignation of 1782 the King wrote an angry remonstrance against the delay in preparing for him a statement of secret service expenditure : 'I cannot help saying it is the most shameful piece of neglect I ever knew,' he wrote. To this the fallen Minister sent a meek and sorrowful reply of which the following appears to be a draft or copy :

¹ A clergyman, 'the fighting parson.' Sometime editor of the *Morning Post*; dramatic author. A strange character. Created a baronet as Sir Henry Bate Dudley.

² The King's arithmetic seems to be at fault.

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April 18, 1782.

‘Lord N. with a heart full of the deepest affliction at having incurred his My’s displeasure, humbly throws himself at his My’s feet. . . . L^d N. pressed Mr. R[obinson: Secretary of the Treasury] a hundred times over and over to make up his accts at proper periods; and among the many sources of uneasiness of L^d N’s mind . . . it has embittered his life . . . Mr. R . . . will state the reasons which have caused the delay. If L^d N. had thought that the expense attending elections and re-elections in the years 1779, 1780 and 1781 would have amounted to 72,000*l*. he certainly would not have advised his Majesty to have embarked on any such expense. . . . If L^d N. remembers correctly, the last gen^l election cost near 50,000*l*. to the Crown, beyond which expense there was a pension of 1000*l*. a year to L^d Montacute and 500*l*. a year to Mr. Selwyn for interests in Midhurst and Luggershall. . . . He has endeavoured through the course of his life to promote his M—y’s service to the best of his judgment; no one can better know his unfitness for the office he held than he did himself, and his M—y will do him the justice to own that from the very first he frequently and repeatedly represented his incapacity and solicited for his dismissal.’

The King had every right to demand an account from Mr. Robinson. He was not above the smallest details of administration, and was quite willing to do business with what we should call a Whip, without ceremony. For instance, on March 6th, 1781, he had sent Robinson 6000*l*.

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‘to be placed to the same account as the sum already paid over on August 21st,’ in reply to a letter giving an account of speeches and votes after a debate.¹

There were, indeed, two duties, as George III. deemed them, in which his assiduity was un-failing. He was never too much occupied with grave problems of State or with national calamities to overlook the opportunities of patronage. America might be slipping through our fingers or France threatening to invade our shores; he still had time to see to every appointment that had to be made, from a bishop to an under-secretary. And he insisted on his right to go electioneering as vigorously as any borough-owner of them all. During the Westminster Election of 1774 he wrote to North:

‘I have apprized Lord Delawarr to have the Horse and Grenadier Guards privately spoke to for their votes in favour of Lord Percy and Lord Thomas Clinton; they have a large number of votes.’

Windsor he felt bound to keep straight, and he was not afraid of any trick or inducement that would bring votes to his own men. On May 3rd, 1780, he wrote to Robinson as follows:

‘This day Lord North acquainted me of his wish of supporting Mr. Powny’s inclination of representing the Borough of New Windsor. I shall in consequence get my tradesmen en-

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

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couraged to appear for him. I shall . . . order the houses I rent at Windsor to stand in the parish rate in different names of my servants, so that it will create six votes.'

And when Admiral Keppel appeared as candidate for the Whigs, his Majesty canvassed diligently. In and out of the mercers' shops he trotted, muttering in his hurried way, 'The Queen wants a gown, wants a gown; no Keppel, no Keppel.'

Nor was his Majesty satisfied when he had got the right men elected. He had every intention of seeing that they voted to his liking. If not, woe betide them. He studied every division list; and that not only from curiosity. If Colonel Burgoyne and Lt.-Col. Harcourt had been absent from the division, he wrote to North on March 12th, 1772, he would have dismissed the one from his Governorship of Fort William and the other from his place in the Bedchamber:

'I am strongly of opinion,' he wrote in 1779, 'that the general officers who through Parliamentary favour have got governments, on opposing should lose them.'

We know that he chose his own ministers and made his own cabinets, so far as he could compel human beings to obedience. His eye ranged over the whole political field. At Cirencester House there is a letter from the King to Lord President Bathurst, of January 3rd, 1780, urging him to be very careful whom he nominates for Sheriffs this year:

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‘I understand Lord Derby wishes much for a Mr. Stanley who, I understand, is very ready to forward any meeting Opposition may wish to assemble in the County of Lancaster. No one can be more adverse than Lord Derby. I trust the Chancellor of the Duchy will, therefore, not nominate a Sheriff at his recommendation.’

From the top to the bottom of the political scale he meant the hand of the master to be felt.

Not content with being his own prime minister, King George was his own Secretary of State for War :

‘I have ordered the 3rd 19th and 39th regiments from Ireland to the Leeward Islands ; the 1st battallion of the Royals, 13th, and 69th, to Charles Town’ :

this is how he takes counsel with his ministers. When riots were to be feared he wrote :

‘I have ordered Elliot’s regiment to march from Henley to Hounslow and the Horse Grenadier Guards to take up their horses.’ ‘I will write you word how far I can by Christmas furnish a corps of 2000 men,’

says another letter. And once more : ‘I have authorized Bamber Gascoyne’s offer of a corps raised by the Corporation of Liverpool’ : but, he says, he will not consent to any rank above captain, so as not improperly to admit young and inexperienced men to high rank. He has also signed orders for raising regiments in Scotland. And this is the first that Lord North hears of it.

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In the year 1775 he reports that he 'had wrote' to Hanover giving orders for the embarkation of troops :

'I should not do justice to my electoral troops if I did not express that they show the same zeal for my person that they have ever shown to my ancestors.'

And here it will be convenient to note that George III. reconciled England to the Hanover connection. George I. had made no secret of his love and longing for his native country. George II. had begun with a pretence of loving England; but in practice he was as much a German as his father. George III. said he gloried in the name of Briton, and he made people forget their jealousy and suspicion of the Electorate. The first two Kings had never been off with the old love or really on with the new: the third George had only one love and that was England.

If this passion for management and personal control was almost morbid in its eagerness, it was without prejudice to a more legitimate and profitable spirit of industry. His letter dated July 3rd, 1775, upon Indian affairs displays a close study of the problems to be solved, and a discriminating judgment formed without prejudice. Not less conscientious and unsparing was his laborious journey to Portsmouth in 1778 for the purpose of hastening the preparations of the fleet. 'From the moment I arrived here,' he wrote at '40 min pt 4 a m,' 'not an instant has been lost to forward the

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sailing of the fleet.' He has been afloat and alongside the vessels by 6.30 each morning. And all this energy put out by a man who under-fed and over-fatigued his body. He would spend hours afoot or in the saddle, hunting, or riding up from Windsor to St. James's. He lived principally on slops; tea, barley water, and a 'finger' or two—presumably slices of toast. His utmost indulgence was a slice of meat; for choice, boiled mutton and turnips. Such diet as this he both preached and practised: 'Abstinence and Water are the ablest physician for a cold,' he confided to Lord North, who probably knew better. And when his minister was attacked again, he wrote, 'A little diet will certainly prevent the necessity of calling for physical (*sic*) assistance.'

Simplicity and seemliness were his rule of life throughout. In his distress at hearing of his son's intrigue with Mrs. Robinson, he exclaimed, 'I am happy at being able to say that I never was personally engaged in such a transaction, which perhaps makes me feel this stronger.' And in such innocent recreations as he allowed himself, he was as thorough as he was in business. A letter addressed to Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, on the subject of farming at Kew, attracted some attention. It was signed Ralph Robinson, but its author was King George. His piety was no less abiding and sincere. He once told a clergyman, who had beslavered him with eulogy from the pulpit, that he went to Church to

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hear God praised ; not himself. George II. had been wont to express his approval with the comment, 'a good short sermon': he was no patient worshipper. George III. liked his sermons long and strong. To Bishop Hurd he wrote of

'the comfort of hearing you preach and receiving from your hands the Holy Communion'; and again 'those who encourage religion, virtue, and literature deserve as much solid praise as those who disturb the world and commit all the horrors of war to gain the reputation of being heroes.'

Nothing about George III. is better known to the lightly informed than his ardent championship of the Church of England—a principle of which he was so tenacious that Pitt was obliged to abandon his projects of Roman Catholic Relief in 1804 for fear of making absolute his master's restrained insanity. It is therefore surprising to find that on two occasions at least he was accused and reviled as a betrayer of his Faith. When the Quebec Act was passed in 1774, Chatham denounced it as 'a breach of the Coronation Oath and a gross violation of the Protestant Religion'; and the mob howled at the King, 'Remember Charles I. Remember James II. Long live the Duke of Gloucester,' who had voted against the Bill.

In 1778 was passed a measure of substantial relief to the Roman Catholics. No opposition was offered in the House of Commons, and we hear nothing of a rally of the 'King's friends' in

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the House of Lords, such as Lord Temple was authorised to direct against the Government's India Bill in 1783. It is true that in 1778 the King threatened to abdicate—three times in four days, says Lord Brougham. But nowhere is it recorded that this was because of his misery at having to assent to the relief of Roman Catholics. The prospect of having to do with the Opposition, 'Chatham or any other branch of it,' was what drove him to despair. 'I would rather lose the crown I now wear than bear the ignominy of possessing it under their shackles,' he vowed. In moments of excitement he was apt to make these threats. He did so during the Wilkes disturbances. During his struggle with Rockingham in March 1782, for the disposal of places, he had his yacht ready for instant departure. Next year, when the birth of the Portland Administration was attended by pangs even more violent and prolonged, he cried out that he wished he were eighty or ninety, or dead: he would abdicate and take the Queen with him rather than have the Duke of Portland and Fox. We are nowhere told that the Roman Catholic Bill of 1778 provoked any wail of this kind; yet it was undoubtedly regarded as a concession not easily to be reconciled with unswerving loyalty to the Church.

'If the Church of England is satisfied with being reconciled to the Church of Rome, and thinks it a compensation for the loss of America

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and all credit in Europe, she is as silly an old woman as any granny in an almhouse.'

So wrote Horace Walpole to Cole. And to Conway he said :

' I know nothing [the ministry] have done, or been suffered to do, but restore the Roman Catholic Religion—and that, too, was by the desire of the Court.'

The indirect sequel of this Act was the Gordon Riots ; but before they had begun, Cowper, the poet, was writing to Unwin to point out the resemblance between Charles I. and George III. :

' The waste of public money, and especially the suspicion that obtains of a fixed design in Government to favour the growth of Popery, are features common to both faces.'

Yet, as a son of the Church, and as head of the Church, he was equally exemplary, and as a private individual he had many endearing qualities. He was a faithful husband, and so far an affectionate parent that it was grief at the death of his daughter Amelia that finally destroyed his reason. The editor of his Letters goes so far as to say that he had the popular qualities of Charles II. without his vices. Certain it is that when Hardwicke waited on him to refuse the seals of office in 1766 he came away confessing :

' I was so far struck with—I wish I may not add so far the dupe of—his Majesty's gracious and condescending reception of me that I verily believe had he pressed me to take the seals, I should have accepted out of pure duty and zeal.'

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Charles Yorke, the younger and weaker brother, having pledged himself to his friends not to become Lord Chancellor, succumbed to the blandishments of the King, and consented, to his own undoing. Poor Lord Barrington bemoaned his evil plight in having to vote against his conscience, without having the heart to desert his master, as an infatuated youth might sob of his shameful bondage to his mistress. Lord North in vain attempted to throw off the yoke of service again and again.

To compare King George with Charles II. is not particularly apt. One was habitually industrious and serious; the other was inextricably idle, extremely dissolute, and a scoffer. Charles could fascinate and say witty things. George lacked the graces. He had a blunt and droll way of putting things. He accounted for Bute's appointment as Secretary of State by the fact that he was tired of having two Secretaries (Chatham and Holderness) of whom one would and the other could do nothing; he meant to have one who both could and would act. And when the Lord Chancellor suggested sending for Thomas Pitt in 1783, he blurted out: 'Send for Mr. Thomas Pitt or Mr. Thomas Anybody.' During his attack of insanity in 1788 the approach of convalescence was detected through a remarkably shrewd retort. He resented the attendance of the Rev. Francis Willis, of Boston, who had won a reputation by his successful treatment of lunatics. The patient objected

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to a clergyman practising as a doctor; Willis argued that Christ himself ministered to the sick—
'Yes, but I never heard he had 700*l.* for doing it,' said the King.¹

But his Majesty does not live in history as a humourist. Nor was he a man of finely cultivated taste. He never had time to repair the deficiencies of his education in boyhood. To Miss Burney he confided this honest criticism:

'Was there ever such stuff as a great part of Shakespeare? Only one must not say so. What! Is there not sad stuff? What!'

Wraxall says his only reading was the paper after dinner, and he slept over that, no matter what was in it. George once declared that it was Hurd's *Moral and Political Dialogues* that made him a Bishop; but a sceptical writer has insinuated that even if the King had digested and relished the works of the divine, he was influenced less by his own intellectual admiration than by the political arguments of his advisers. We have seen that Walpole believed him to be ready to subscribe to one literary enterprise. He certainly instructed North to give 100*l.* towards publishing a new edition of La Croye's Coptic Dictionary, which argues a catholic taste. What is of more interest to us, he bought Bute's collection of pamphlets and gave them to the nation; and to him we owe the King's Library in the British Museum, of which the nucleus was formed by the purchase of the

¹ *William Pitt*, by J. H. Rose, 414.

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library of Consul Smith of Venice.¹ He was patron of the Royal Academy and gave large grants in money, besides quarters in Somerset House ; but he preferred Ramsay to Reynolds, and only sat to Sir Joshua when he was painted for the Royal Academy. He was not coldly indifferent to the arts and sciences, which he imperfectly understood, but perhaps he was more at ease when he held friendly converse with ' Capability ' Brown on the less abstruse subject of landscape gardening.

He was, however, essentially a man of action, and it is by the fruits of his labours, not the accomplishments of his leisure, that we must judge him. He was as brave as his grandfather, who jumped off his unruly horse at the battle of Dettingen because he was sure his own legs would never run away with him. ' I would on no account pass the Bills otherwise than in person at a moment like this,' he protested when he was warned that his progress to Westminster might be stormy. It was stormy, but not for a moment did he quail. He believed the mob to be full of menace to himself and to the State, but he was not afraid of confronting it. During the Keppel riots, Sandwich, in alarm, took upon himself to call out the Guards and urged the King to retire to Kew. The King laughed at him and countermanded the order. During the Gordon Riots, when his ministers lost their heads and their nerves, he kept

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography*. George III. formed the library ; George IV. presented it to the nation.

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both. He took the opinion of the Law Officers for form's sake, though it probably influenced him not at all; then he assumed full responsibility for employing troops, and the riots were at an end. King George's conception of a constitutional monarchy may have been culpably mistaken, but one cannot feel contempt for a man who never vacillated in what he at all events believed to be the right policy. And he had indomitable spirit:

‘I trust Divine Providence, the justice of our cause, the bravery and activity of our navy: I wish Lord North would review it in the same light for the ease of his mind’;

so he wrote in the bad days of the war. Whatever else North did, he made a memorandum of the phrases and put them into the next King's Speech. When in the following year the unhappy Minister pointed to the dwindling of his following in the division lobby, the undaunted King reminded him that whenever Grenville had shown signs of being dispirited,

‘I instantly answered that if he would but hide his feelings and speak with firmness the first occasion that offered, he would find his numbers return.’

In October 1781 Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown and even the King had reason to be bowed down. As for poor North, Lord George Germain said afterwards that he took the news like a ball in his breast: ‘Oh God, it is all over,’ he wailed. Not so George III.: of him Germain

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could relate that the letter in which he acknowledged the receipt of the news was calm enough and spoke of nothing but steady resolution: his agitation was only betrayed by his omission to date it. And to North the King wrote:

‘If measures are well connected, a good end may yet be made to the war, but if we despond, certain ruin ensues. . . . Many men chuse rather to despond on difficulties than to get out of them.’

Where he was not blinded by prejudice or predilection he had good judgment and shrewdness. He was urged to receive addresses in favour of the war that some constituencies had been invited to prepare, and he at once objected that they would only provoke counter-addresses against it: in which surmise he was fully justified by the event. He was not easily duped. In March 1778, when Conway was assuring the House of Commons that Franklin sought for peace with this country and desired to come to a friendly settlement on the basis of independence, the King was writing to North:

‘The many instances of the inimical conduct of Franklin to this country makes me aware that hatred to this country is the constant object of his mind. . . . Yet I think . . . it may be proper to keep open the channel of intercourse with that insidious man.’

Of another pseudo-peacemaker he wrote: ‘it convinces me that he is entirely an American and that every word he used on that occasion

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was to deceive.' And he knew when to yield. He consented to the introduction of North's conciliatory bills in '78: 'not from any absurd ideas of unconditional surrender my mind never harboured,' but for fear of alienating by his refusal the less bellicose spirits in the country. He was one of the first to see that war with France was inevitable, and in November 1776 he made Keppel promise that when this added peril came, he would put to sea once more. He also had the wisdom to perceive that, pledged as he was to persevere, once America was reinforced by the squadrons and arms of France, the plan of campaign must be modified and operations confined to holding the coast towns. To make such a concession as this was to sacrifice his most cherished convictions to the logic of facts.

As for Parliamentary management he was full of resource. During the battle with the reporters, he wrote to North that this

'strange and lawless method of publishing debates in the papers must be stopped: but,' he goes on, 'is not the House of Lords as a Court of Record the best court to bring such miscreants before, as it can fine as well as imprison, and as the Lords have broader shoulders to support any odium that this salutary measure may occasion in the eyes of the vulgar?'

And to Robinson he once sent these remarkably candid instructions:

'Lord Sandwich has such a mean opinion of

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all my intelligence, and all my suggestions, that I would have you send him all the enclosed intelligence as from yourself.'

It is not easy to deny that the adroitness of a party manager was apt to degenerate into the duplicity of an intriguer. We have heard Sir William Anson's accusation: and he is not without authority. Shelburne believed that the King betrayed the confidence of Ministers in order to make mischief, and W. W. Grenville wrote to his brother Temple on March 17th, 1783: 'The King's object seems to be to set them quarrelling between themselves.' Rockingham, in speaking of the Government of 1766, said that the King never showed him such distinguished marks of kindness as after he had secretly determined to get rid of him. And in this case at all events Lord Hertford was justified in telling Walpole that 'indeed people do think the King very double': for when Conway's motion to repeal the Stamp Act was carried, the King wrote to Rockingham congratulating him that 'the debate may be reckoned a very favourable appearance for the repeal of the Stamp Act': whereas the Duke of Bedford reported that the King was never so affected as he was at the result of the great majority.¹ George III. hated the repeal, and when the question came on again, the King's household voted with Grenville against the King's Ministers. Rockingham protested in vain, and

¹ *Rockingham Memoirs*, i. 276.

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Walpole records that the Government were 'disgusted at the notorious treachery of the Court.'

If in his stubborn determination to govern, as the head of a firm governs, King George was guilty of deviation from the strait way of honesty, it must be further admitted that he suffered no principles of gratitude to guide his footsteps. No meritorious service in politics, no gallantry and devotion on the field of battle, could save a man from being struck out of the list of Privy Councillors or of place-holders, if at any time his conduct did not square with his master's notion of duty. The King certainly owed much to Bute from his own point of view, even if that was not the point of view of his subjects: yet he discarded Bute without a pang. To Chatham, who had made England what George found her, when he came into his kingdom, he might well have admitted an obligation that personal dislike could never obscure; yet he reserved for Chatham his special proscription: 'I solemnly declare nothing shall bring me to treat personally with Lord Chatham,' was one of his mildest professions of hostility whilst the old warrior was still in armour; and when, soon afterwards, the hand of death was drawing the curtain before the stricken and silent figure, he had no compunction in asking Lord North the dry and practical question, 'May not the political exit of Lord Chatham incline you to continue at the head of affairs?' It is true that

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he drew the line at the vindictive indulgence of spite. In one letter to North he writes :

‘The making of Lord Chatham’s family suffer for the conduct of their father is not in the least agreeable to my sentiments. . . . But when decrepitude or death puts an end to him as a trumpet of sedition, I shall make no difficulty in placing the second son’s name instead of the father’s and making up the pension to 3000*l*.’

Yet when death had brought an end, he made no secret of his annoyance that Parliament should have voted a public funeral and a monument in Westminster Abbey. He trusted that this was a testimony of gratitude strictly limited to Chatham’s policy as war-lord in former days ; ‘or this compliment, if paid to his general conduct, is rather an offensive measure to me personally’—an insinuation which few of Chatham’s adherents would have been at pains to dispel. The Court, so Walpole said, found much comfort in the fact that Garrick’s funeral drew a larger crowd than that of the man who, according to some people, displayed no less dramatic genius on another stage, where it was his to create rather than interpret.

The King certainly was staunch to North as long as North stood by him ; but when the official ties of the King’s binding were first thrown off, and then exchanged for others abhorrent to him, there remained no bonds of love to prevent the old affection from vanishing away.

The King in fact must be master, with authority

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unlimited and supreme. He could love any man well enough so long as he was useful. In his religious and moral austerity he must have detested the characters of many of his confidential servants; he could overlook that so long as they obeyed his orders and did their work properly; but towards a Grenville who bored him with lectures, a Chatham who awed him with his strength, a North, whose powers of endurance proved to be not inexhaustible, he could show neither indulgence nor gratitude.

To understand the character of George III., one must keep in mind the idea of sovereignty as Queen Elizabeth understood it; not Queen Victoria. He would not be ashamed of the theory of divine right. He was the father of his people: the trustee of the sovereign power; to his God, his People, and his Crown, he was answerable for every law that was passed, every turn in the tide of the nation's life. His views upon the royal prerogative as the ultimate authority were stated with perfect clearness in a letter that he wrote to North concerning a reply which he had to give to a petition against the Quebec Bill in 1774. He says he hopes it will always be possible for the Crown to get an objectionable measure thrown out in one or other House of Parliament without making use of its right of refusing the assent:

‘yet,’ he goes on, ‘I shall never consent to using any expression that tends to establish that at no time the making use of that power is necessary.’

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He was essentially and superlatively Tory-minded. 'I will have no innovations in my time,' he told Lord Eldon, who could perfectly appreciate the sentiment. 'We seem to have no other object but to be altering every rule our ancestors have left us,' he complained to North. And again, 'If Lord North can see with the same degree of enthusiasm as I do the beauty, excellence, and perfection of the British Constitution . . . ' He hated newspapers, not without good reason ; to him they were 'the daily production of untruth.' Large and liberal concessions were no part of his philosophy : 'Experience has thoroughly convinced me,' he told North, 'that this country gains nothing by granting to her dependencies indulgences ; for opening the door encourages a desire for more.' This embodied his sentiments on the Irish question of the day. In like spirit he deprecated any yielding to the weavers on strike, because 'it would be an encouragement to every other body of men riotously to combine as a sure means of obtaining what wild minds may dictate.'

Animated by such firm convictions, by such sacred ideals, as these, how can it be a matter for surprise that the language of surrender, or even irresolution, in the conflict with America seemed to him vile poltroonery, a sacrifice ruinous and irretrievable, a felonious breach of trust ? As to the right of Parliament to tax America he had no doubt whatever. In answer to a petition denying it he deprecated 'ideas that I will ever

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vehemently oppose as they tend to annihilate one of the essential rights of a supreme legislature.' And he felt that his duty obliged him to insist on the principle :

'I have no objection afterwards to their seeing that there is no inclination for the present to lay fresh taxes on them, but I am clear that there must always be one tax to keep up the right, and as such I approve of the Tea Duty.'

As late as 1780 he was writing :

'I can never suppose this country so far lost to all ideas of self importance as to be willing to grant America independence. . . . If we do not feel our own consequence, other nations will not treat us above what we esteem ourselves.' And 'A small state may certainly subsist, but a great one mouldering cannot get into an inferior position but must be annihilated.'

In the previous year he had written his opinions on the situation to Lord North in a letter which is certainly not that of a madman, and which entitles the writer to the credit of thinking and caring more for the interests of his country than his own comfort and convenience :

'June 11. 79.

'Whether the laying a tax was deserving all the evils that have arisen from it, I suppose no man could alledge that without being thought more fit for Bedlam than a seat in the Senate ; but step by step the demands of America have risen : independence is their object ; that certainly is one which every man not willing to sacrifice every object to a *momentary* and inglorious peace must concur with me in thinking this country can never submit to . . . The West Indies must

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follow them . . . Ireland would soon follow the same plan and be a separate State . . . Shoals of manufacturers would leave this country for the new Empire.'

The West Indies, he points out, must become dependent on North America, and 'this island would be reduced to itself and soon would be a poor island indeed.'

If he was wrong in his calculations, and at times indiscreet and extravagant in his talk, some excuses may be found. It was not through obstinacy or conceit that he was brought to believe that victory would be neither very hardly won nor very long delayed ; he believed what he was told by those who had the best means of judging. If at times he was vehement enough to declare that every means of distressing America must meet with his concurrence ; or that he would as lief fight the Bostonians as the French, some allowance must be made for a man who was in the agony of a vital struggle, and whose excitable spirit was sorely harassed by opposition, disappointment, and the sickness of hope deferred. The state of nervous tension in which he lived may be detected in the childish outburst with which he announced to the Queen the capture of Ticonderoga : 'I have beat them : beat all the Americans.'

Not only his own honour and dignity were at stake ; he was fighting, according to his sincere belief, for the welfare and the very existence of his dominions ; and he deemed that in such a cause

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every man that was against him was a traitor ; and that every man that was not with him was against him. So much the more praiseworthy was his conduct when the truth had at last to be recognised, and the flag had to be ignominiously pulled down. No wonder W. W. Grenville told his brother Temple that the King had ‘spoken to him of American Independence, which seems to have been a most bitter pill indeed’ (March 17th, 1783). The unhappy monarch had by his confession sent up

‘the most frequent prayers to Heaven to guide me so to act that posterity may not lay the downfall of this once respectable Empire at my door’ ;

adding the rather droll admission that he

‘found consolation in the reflection that knavery seems to be so much the striking feature of the inhabitants of America that it may not in the end be an evil that they will become aliens to this kingdom.’¹

This point of view he expressed with better grace in the King’s Speech of December 5th, 1783, the composition of which, it is probable, was, for once, not the handiwork of his ministers only :

‘In thus admitting the separation from the Crown of these kingdoms, I have sacrificed every consideration of my own to the wishes and opinions of my people. I make it my humble and earnest prayer to Almighty God that Great Britain may not feel the evils that might result from so great a dismemberment of the Empire, and that America may be free from those calamities which have

¹ Letter to Lord Shelburne : *Life*, ii. 203.

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formerly proved in the Mother Country how essential monarchy is to the enjoyment of constitutional liberty.'

Better than that: the King was capable of an act of propriety and self-restraint which must have taxed his temper and pride to the utmost, and entitled him to the place amongst gentlemen which his son most impudently claimed for himself. When he had to receive the first American representative at the Court of St. James, he welcomed him with as much graciousness as if he were a minister of his own choice who had come in the nick of time from some favourite neighbouring state.

The King's feelings towards his mother are not easily discovered. According to Walpole, he told his bride, as soon as she arrived in London, never to be alone with her, for she was an artful woman and would try to govern her; which, after all, was an elementary observation of character. Walpole further reproaches him with allowing her jewels, plate, and trinkets to be sold at Christie's. There is no evidence to uphold the theory that he believed her to be guilty of the charges that scandalously coupled her name with the name of Bute. His dismissal of Bute is amply accounted for by the fact that he had no further need of him, and probably was thinking more of what people would say of him and Bute than of Bute and his mother. Lord Brougham's dictum that 'he was not a puppet and did not rule by favourites,' explains why he had done with Bute.

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As to his mother, his treatment of her has to be judged principally by what happened in 1765. In consequence of his recent illness, it was thought expedient to pass a Regency Bill ; and, in consequence of the unpopularity of the Princess and her Bute alliance, it was also thought expedient to exclude her name deliberately from the number of those who were to be capable of assuming the powers of government. That the King consented reluctantly admits of no doubt. That he was extremely angry when the House of Commons, so far from objecting to her inclusion, refused to vote her exclusion, and protested against the insult to her person, is very certain and most natural. His gratitude to the man who was responsible for putting matters right, was shown in a curious manner. It was Mr. Morton, who moved the insertion of the Princess's name on May 9th, 1765 ; and five years later we find the King writing to Lord North that Mr. Morton is to be presented to the Queen 'next day before the Drawing Room and to himself just before the Drawing Room,' as Morton sets out on Friday for Wales,¹ and presumably his convenience deserves to be studied. It is not to be supposed that the King was on bad terms with his mother ; but it may be assumed with safety that he had no intention whatever of being dictated to by her any more than by Lord Chatham or Lord Grenville. Indeed, he was very likely the more shy of her,

¹ Donne, i. 21.

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because the public averred that she and Bute were the powers behind the Throne. He was going to give no reason for that belief, if he could avoid it.

It has already been said of him that in his home he was amiable and affectionate by instinct ; but when his authority was flouted, another temper prevailed. To have escaped a quarrel with his eldest son would have been to lack the badge of all his tribe. George IV., in his youth, had good looks and good manners, and he was not born without brains. Consequently he had his train of admirers and satellites, male and female. But he must have been radically wrong. Except as a young lover in a novel, where he can be produced as a more or less romantic figure, he has received less mercy at the hands of historians than kings so commonly abused as Richard III. and James II. Not even George III., with all his industry and morality, could have made him sober, truthful, or self-respecting ; but it is probable that he either set to work with the boy in the wrong way, or very soon gave him up in despair. Walpole says that the Prince had some cause for rebellion : at the age of fifteen he was complaining that he was still made to wear frilled collars like a baby : ‘see how I am treated,’ he cried ; and truly this was a severe trial for one who had the royal passion for costume, at an age when costume had begun to present its fullest charms and possibilities.

The Prince had not long to wait for his revenge, and in seeking his own, he was made the

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catpaw of another. There were his uncles. Gloucester was a man of invalid habit, and would have been glad to make his peace and lead a quiet life. Cumberland was a mischievous rake: he had a mind to give the King as good as he got, and he cunningly wounded him through his son. He taught young George to gamble and to drink: one night at Greenwich he organised a party for his entertainment, which degenerated into such a debauch that even the youth himself was shamed into admitting his regret at having been there. The King's anger was mixed with a homely grief: he had no love of family feuds, and would have been only too thankful if he could have been spared them. But what was he to do? He told the Duke of Gloucester that after hunting at Windsor, the Prince and his uncle Cumberland had taken the only chaise to London and left him to get home in a cart, if he could find one. Gloucester asked why he did not forbid the Prince to see his uncle; to which the King replied with unwonted meekness, that he 'feared the Prince would not obey him'; with a pathetic afterthought that, moreover, he did not like to separate relations.

In due course the Prince came under the influence of Charles Fox, as bad a companion and example as a young man could have. Fox was copious in all his evil ways: if he cared for quality in a woman or a racehorse, he was not content with quality without quantity when he

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devoted his nights to cards and wine ; and he was little qualified to curb the growing vices of a spendthrift and a drunkard. By the time the Prince was of age, moreover, Fox was the avowed enemy of the Court, and even so rigid and faithful a Whig as Lord Russell could find it in his conscience to admit that

‘thus the King was shocked by the morals, thwarted by the politics, and deeply irritated by the personal connexions of his son’ : for, he goes on to say, ‘Charles Fox, now released from the forced industry of office, fell back into licentious habits and idle dissipation.’¹

In the case of the Duke of Gloucester, the King was bound by his sense of duty. We may infer this from what we have already learnt from Walpole. The King one day met his brother’s baby and stopped to examine it, as a friendly uncle should. Next time they met, the Queen was present and no recognition was allowed. It was the Queen, according to Walpole, who discountenanced any spirit of forgiveness. The Duke, indeed, had sinned doubly by marrying, and by concealing the fact of his marriage for five years. He had run the dangerous risk of having no witnesses to the ceremony, for fear his bride’s vanity should tempt her to proclaim her rank ; but as we read her story in Walpole, her conduct appears so modest and judicious that her husband’s want of confidence appears no less unwarranted

¹ *Life of Fox*, i. 336-7.

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than ungallant. The Duke saw the King, but the terms of their reconciliation were not and could not well be satisfactory where both men had a grievance. The King defended his refusal to receive the Duchess on the ground that it would astonish and offend his brother sovereigns, in whose courts the laws of pedigree and etiquette were inexorable. To this the Duke replied, aptly enough, that his wife had already been received in some foreign courts, and that to deny her admission to his own was to administer a tolerably severe rebuke to these more indulgent potentates. However, the Duke and his wife were obliged to content themselves as best they could with a wandering and not very comfortable existence; and of this we get a glimpse worth noticing through the eyes of no less a person than the Empress Maria Theresa, who, it seems, was no admirer of the simple life. In a letter (1777) to her daughter, wife of Ferdinand, Duke of Modena, she says that she has seen the Gloucester family at Lake Garda :

‘They have two children who usually go about bareheaded and without stockings, the girl with her hair cut short on her forehead like a boy. It is a style I dislike exceedingly. . . . Next thing we shall see children with no clothes at all running about like negroes.’¹

It is only our business to contemplate George III. as Lord North knew him—the

¹ *Maria Theresa*, by Mary Moffat, 345.

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George III. who entered into battle with Wilkes and America with such humiliating results. These are the conspicuous events that give character and colour to the first half of his reign. They secured for him a place in history not to be envied: nor must a defence be made on the plea that his Minister was worthless. Whatever Lord North may or may not have been, the last person to shift responsibility for what was done on to his shoulders would have been King George himself.

But if the King's early record was not enviable, his plight at the end was to be envied still less. Nevertheless it was his lot to be consoled now, if consolation could by any means be imparted, by sympathy unanimous and tender; he became a figure round which was gathering an atmosphere of veneration, though he heeded not nor knew; until, after further tumults and perils, as fearful as any that had made the old days evil, he was to be saluted as the happy warrior, whose task was done and whose end was honour. When George III. died in 1820, the obstinacy and blunders of his earlier days were forgotten: he was the man who had reigned for sixty years; who had loved his country with a great and holy love; who had been clean and upright in his living; who had been sorely afflicted; and was not permitted to know, after all, that in his name England had done her duty, and by her example and her efforts had taken a foremost part in thwarting the ambition

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and breaking the power of Napoleon. For this he could obviously claim no credit, and to ascribe it was illogical. For the faults of the former years he was certainly answerable; and to blame him for these is logical. It is a damaging admission that greatness was thrust upon him by his servants when he was no longer capable of commanding; and that in the days of his arbitrary power there was little glory to boast of.

In the Wilkes affair the King was certainly at fault. He thought he detected symptoms of danger to the crown and constitution; and by a kind of homœopathic treatment he produced a violent outbreak of the malady he feared. But if he chose the wrong remedy, there is this to be said for him: the germs of disease were undoubtedly lurking in the political body, no matter how they got there. The Wilkes process was one of irritation, not inoculation.

In the case of America, it is much easier to say his policy was wrong than to say what policy would have been right. If it had to be an alternative between fighting for the colonies to the last shot and preparing to let them go altogether, then the circumstances of the time and the laws of human nature left no possible doubt as to what King George's choice must and would be.

To ask why he did not seek a wise solution in giving up the claim to taxation is, indeed, to beg the question. To him, and not to him alone, the right to tax was the test of sovereignty. Surrender

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that, and you surrendered the supremacy of the British Crown.

Some there were who long preserved their animosity against the George of the eighteenth century. As late as 1830 Coke of Norfolk was not ashamed to speak of him at Lynn as 'that wretch covered with blood,' but this was a flourish of rhetorical bombast without substance. If George III. erred, he erred not in wantonness, malice, or indifference: he was driven on by excess of zeal in what he fervently believed to be the path of duty and honour: and in the robustness and consistency of his perseverance there was something not ignoble. He made mistakes, and costly mistakes; but he strove with all his heart to be a faithful steward, and it is exaggeration to say that he was invariably found wanting. He was a great patriot, and he wore himself out with unflagging labour. If his memory and record are not entirely illustrious, they are very far indeed from being odious.

CHAPTER VI

SOME MINISTERS

HAVING considered what manner of man was the King with whom North had to deal, it would be well to look with a little discrimination at the group of ministers who rose and fell in turn on the political tide around him. It has already been explained that no account of Chatham or of Newcastle need be given here.¹ Newcastle had been North's political godfather, but he was leaving the stage as North came on. His indefatigable zeal was not, indeed, exhausted ; he clung to the office of First Lord until he was fairly hunted out by a series of indignities which made the position intolerable to one who cared very much for power and not at all for salary. He even reappeared as Privy Seal in 1765 ; but he was only a phantom or an echo of the old wire-puller, who had revelled in the politics of the last reign. To Newcastle, as Prime Minister, succeeded Lord Bute, a man to whom history has dealt out a full and possibly an excessive measure of harshness. One writer says he was 'a mere court favourite,

¹ See page 30.

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with the temper and abilities of a gentleman usher.'¹ Another dismisses him as 'a pompous amateur.'² He was very far from being a great man, but he was not such a political dummy as these sneers would imply. He had been elected as a Scottish representative peer so far back as 1737, having succeeded his father as third Earl in 1723. He married in 1736 the only daughter of Edward Wortley Montagu and the redoubtable Lady Mary. He had hitherto shown no disposition to play a prominent part anywhere except in private theatricals ; in these he took great delight. In 1747 he found himself for some reason at Egham Races. It rained. Frederick, Prince of Wales, who had come over from Cliveden, wished for a game of cards to speed the time of waiting, and Bute was introduced to complete the party. Thence arose an intimacy much more durable, and much more exciting in its consequences, than any possible combination at whist. He became a lord of the bedchamber and the confidential friend of Frederick. Death quickly carried off the Prince, but his widow kept Bute unofficially in her service. In 1756 her son was granted an establishment, and the King consented to Bute's appointment as Groom of the Stole. The private history of the following years will always be obscure ; but it is evident that Bute had established himself in the confidence of his master, if not in his heart.

¹ J. R. Green, *Short History*, 763.

² Sir W. Anson, *Grafton Memoirs*, xviii.

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George II. died in October 1760. It is said that on the day of his accession George III. offered Bute a Secretaryship of State.¹ It is a fact that next month he made him Groom of the Stole, a Lord of the Bedchamber, and a Privy Councillor. In March 1761 Holderness was bribed out of office, and Bute became Secretary of State. In May 1762 Newcastle was driven out and Bute became Prime Minister. Already, in October 1761, Pitt had found the combination of the King and the new Minister too much for him, and had retired in disgust. Thus, in eighteen months, the boy King and his gentleman-usher-amateur had got rid of the most inveterate office-seeker and the most powerful office-holder in the country, and had the game for the moment in their own hands.

Bute's object was to make peace with France and Spain. He engaged Fox to bribe the House of Commons for him, and got his treaty signed at Paris on February 10th, 1763. Whatever may have been the fallacies in his policy and the defects in the treaty, at all events the result was blessed with the approval of so admired a master of foreign statecraft as old Lord Granville.² For good or for ill, Bute succeeded in what he undertook to do, and his short term of office cannot be written down as a contemptible fiasco. Horace Walpole says that on January 19th, 1762,

‘ Bute harangued Parliament for the first time, and

¹ *Political History of England*, x. 11.

² *Life of Lord Carteret*, by A. Ballantyne, 364.

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the few that dared to sneer at his theatric fustian did not find it quite so ridiculous as they wished.'

He was ever a play actor, and an amateur actor at that; but an accomplished amateur withal.

Bute laboured under difficulties. The Scotch were an abhorred race. It was commonly held that they were ragged and rapacious savages, who were starved out of their own country and had come south to mend their fortunes at the expense of honest Englishmen. And Bute was a Scotchman. A Court favourite has always been an unpopular character; the more so when the favour is supposed to be due to a woman's influence; and Bute was held to be a gross example of the Court favourite. Finally, Pitt was the darling of the public, and Bute had thwarted Pitt. This combination was too much for him, and on April 8th, 1763, he resigned. Walpole wrote to Montagu, 'he pleads to the world bad health; to his friends more truly that the nation was set at him.' It is not easy to say how the King liked this. Walpole thought that at the moment it caused him a pang; but his opinion was apt to shift. The King had certainly lost the minister of his choice, but to him no man was indispensable. He is alleged to have told Rose in 1804 that he had been induced to appoint Bute by the Dukes of Devonshire and Newcastle;¹ but this is difficult to believe. There is no reason to think that he cared for Devonshire's opinion, and Newcastle had every

¹ *John Stuart, Earl of Bute*, by J. A. Lovat Fraser, 15.

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reason to look on Bute with envy and malice. He was surely the King's own nominee ; and the best that history has said for him is that he was much influenced in his resignation by a reluctance to bring unpopularity on his young master.

Bute left office with a reversion of 52,000*l.* a year for his relations,¹ a predatory act that contrasted ill with the recent refusal of Newcastle to take a retiring pension, although his years of office had reduced his income from 25,000*l.* a year to 6000*l.* And now Bute assumed, or was thrust into, a part to which most attention and criticism have been directed. The King was too wise to turn adrift forthwith the man who had put the reins of government into his hands and taught him how to hold them. He was now squarely seated on the box and needed no more teaching ; but he must have men about him, and he chose to have Bute, who was not unjustified in claiming to have a personal interest in the running of the coach. Grenville formed a Government, and for one appointment, at all events, Bute was responsible. At his solicitation Shelburne took the Board of Trade.² Then followed overtures to the Bedford party and Pitt, conducted by Bute with the King's consent. But if the King acted under dictation he must have done it unknowingly, and Bute must have been a tactful diplomatist ; for by this time George was King indeed.

In August 1763, Bute commissioned Shelburne

¹ *Political History*, x. 45.

² Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, i. 200.

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to negotiate with Bedford, Gower, his ally, and Pitt.¹ On August 25th he called on Pitt himself.² But here his diplomacy was far less successful. Bedford would have nothing to do with Bute, nor Pitt with Bedford.³ Bedford stipulated as a condition precedent to any and every arrangement that Bute should have nothing to do or to say in the matter. Pitt proscribed more widely. Shelburne resigned disgusted and dissatisfied, and on September 20th Bute wrote to him :

‘ Since (your resignation) I protest on the word of a gentleman I know no more of politics, of the King, or the Minister’s ideas or measures than I do of the Mogul’s Court. . . . This letter . . . shall be the last on political matters, for those I heartily take my leave of.’

So Bedford came to terms, and Bute was supposed to have vanished, never to reappear. But this was a delusion. Bute had retired into the country, but his letter to Shelburne was not to be his last on political matters. In the spring of 1765 King George tried to get rid of his Government ; but he could find no substitutes. Pitt refused on the ground that Bute’s influence was still operating unduly, and to the detriment of the minister nominally responsible for affairs.⁴ Bedford accused the King plainly of breaking faith by ‘consulting the favourite.’⁵ Grenville, in consenting to carry on administration, insisted on a pledge that Bute

¹ Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, i. 200.

² Lovat Fraser, *op. cit.*, 63.

³ Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, i. 203.

⁴ Lecky, iii. 268.

⁵ Stanhope, v. 163.

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should be banished from Court and his brother Mackenzie deprived of his office of Privy Seal of Scotland. The King was bound to agree. Mackenzie was dismissed—to be reinstated, subject to conditions, under Grafton in 1766.

The King has been credited with keeping faith.¹ Lord Hardwicke told his brother, Charles Yorke, that ‘the King professes to know nothing of what Lord Bute is doing’; yet, when the change of Government came in July 1765, we are told that Lord Bute ‘affected to hold the balance between the late and the present administration.’² Years later Bute’s son was authorised to declare that his father had taken no part in politics ‘from the time when the Duke of Cumberland³ was consulted in 1765 to this hour.’ The fact remains that Bute’s ‘influence was universally believed,’⁴ although Conway assured the House of Commons in January 1766 that there was no secret influence behind the throne, and although at that time, at all events, we are now told, the charge was ‘completely groundless.’⁵

In July 1765 the King had succeeded in getting rid of Grenville and finding a successor in Rockingham, and on the 26th Bute wrote to the new minister that ‘he knew as little of affairs here as in Persia, being totally retired from Courts and

¹ *Political History of England*, x. 67.

² *Rockingham Memoirs*, i. 261.

³ The King employed his uncle, who died soon afterwards, as envoy to Pitt.

⁴ Stanhope, v. 163.

⁵ Lecky, iii. 274.

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public business.' But there was already a reaction in his favour. In June the Duke of Richmond had written in his journal of a movement 'in favour of admitting several of Bute's friends' to make the King easy. Rockingham himself suggested the admission of Bute; and the King refused.¹ In February 1766 came overtures from the other side; Grenville and Bedford had so far changed their tone as to cry to him to come over and help them. They met; but Bute was not likely to forget the language they had held but yesterday, and he would have nothing to do with them.

Rockingham went out in July 1766. He at all events did not believe in Bute's extinction. In January of next year he writes to Dowdeswell of the 'necessity of some management towards Lord Bute'; and in September he talks to the Duke of Portland of the necessity of resisting him. During the crisis of July 1766 Bute showed his pursuers plenty of sport. Hardwicke told Charles Yorke that he was 'always hovering between town and country.' The Duke of Richmond in his journal speaks of secret and mysterious visits to Kew. He believed the rumours he heard, but makes a poor case in evidence. He employed spies, who appear to have supplied him with excitement, if not proofs; and he was left to the conclusion that the King undoubtedly saw Pitt and might have seen Bute.

¹ Lovat Fraser, 73.

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Lord Brougham in his *Historical Sketches* tells his version of the story. Of this book Walter Bagehot has said that 'it contains the best sketches of the political men of his generation, one with another, which the world has or is likely to have.' But Lord Brougham's facts are not always as reliable as his judgment. He says that George III. only saw Bute once after he left office; on that occasion Princess Amelia contrived that they should meet in the garden at Gunnersbury; the King, however, turned his back on the ex-minister and scolded the daughter.¹ According to another version the plot was laid at Kew by the Princess Mother.² It is on record that the King told the Duke of York that he had only seen Bute once after he left office; that it was at Kew, and that he cut him then.³ It is very difficult in the face of the evidence to avoid the conclusion that the King was guilty on this occasion, at all events, of 'duplicity,' or that his memory had failed him. Between 1763 and 1765 it cannot be doubted that he and Bute were in touch. After the summer of 1765 Bute was in retreat. As late as 1777 it is said that there remained a general suspicion of his influence,⁴ and it may be believed that the suspicion did not die there.

A facetious M.P.⁵ once addressed this election squib to Lord Fitzwilliam:

¹ *Historical Sketches*, i. 61.

² *Correspondence of John, 4th Duke of Bedford*, iii., xxxiii.

³ Lovat Fraser, 72. ⁴ *American Revolution*, Trevelyan, iii. 183.

⁵ W. Spencer Stanhope, M.P.: *Memoirs of A. M. W. Pickering*, p. 9.

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‘Fitzwilliam, Fitzwilliam,
Your faithful friend still I am,
In advising you’d quit this dispute :
What Yorkshireman true
Can bear to see you
Leagued with Fox, North, Burke, and Lord Bute ?’
No date is given ; but it must surely refer to 1783, when Fox, North, and Burke were all serving in the Portland Administration. But in 1778 Lord Mount Stuart published the denial already quoted, and this probably embodies the truth. Walpole says that after North’s resignation in 1782 ‘it was thought that the King saw Lord Bute,’ but it is extremely unlikely that there was any intention of reviving the old connection on the one side or the other. There are no references to him in the King’s letters to North.

In 1778 Bute played a part on his own account. According to Walpole, Bute sent Eden to Chatham, offering to make him Prime Minister and a duke ; Bute himself was to be Secretary of State. Chatham’s answer was, ‘Tell the fellow if he dares to come out, I will impeach him.’ In May, Chatham died. In August, Lady Chatham heard that Bute was saying that the overture had come to him, not from him, and she threatened to publish the correspondence that had passed. Bute answered evasively. A rejoinder came from William Pitt, so guarded in tone, that there remained an impression that there had been an invitation of some kind from Chatham.¹ It

¹ *Last Journals*, ii. 272 sq.

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appears that the situation had been created by a political busybody, known to Bute, named Sir James Wright. He took upon himself to whisper to Addington, Chatham's doctor, that Bute was eager to see Chatham at the head of the Government. Chatham's answer was less vigorous than the one quoted: he contented himself with saying that a real change would be essential. Bute took this to mean that he must have no finger in the pie, and turned away with the renewed assurance that it was no longer his habit or intention to meddle with politics. And so there was an end of Wright's diplomacy.¹

There can be no ground for believing that the King was still looking to Bute for guidance and support. It is, indeed, to be believed that Bute was no nearer his master's heart than the rest of the ministers and mankind in general. Walpole thinks it worth recording that Lady Bute and her daughter were not asked to the Queen's Ball in 1781—an exclusion shared by the insubordinate Duke of Cumberland: and of Lady Bute he says :

‘ She is one of the best and most sensible women in the world, and though educated by such a mother, or rather with no education at all, she has never made a false step.’

Bute told Addington that the two men the King hated most were himself and Chatham.² The Duke of Grafton told Walpole that George

¹ Stanhope, vi. 322.

² *Last Journals*, ii. 294.

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III. when a boy often expressed hatred of Bute. Walpole's comment is, 'His Majesty is so false that he might express dislike of Bute and yet keep up connexion with him.' The King once wrote to North, 'Is Mr. Attorney-General (Wedderburn) running straight? I doubt all Scots,' which presumably included the one he knew best.

It is clear enough that Bute was denuded of royal favour and political power. In 1772 he wrote to Lord Holland :

'The very few opportunities I have had for many years of being of the least service to any person are now at an end. The sad event of this fatal year [the death of the Princess Mother] has left me without a single friend near the royal person, and I have taken the only part suited to my way of thinking—that of retiring from the world before it retires from me.'

In 1773 he writes to a friend, 'Think of my son Charles being refused everything I asked. I have not had interest to get him a company.' Next year he was elected a representative peer of Scotland, upon which North observed that a Dowager First Lord of the Treasury had a claim to that distinction, and that nobody doubted that this was Bute's political status. In 1780 he was obliged to negotiate with North for the purchase of a seat in Parliament for his son. Obviously the glory was departed.

The Princess Mother died in 1772. What was the true nature of her relations with Bute it would be unprofitable to enquire and impossible

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to decide. There can indeed have been little scruple observed in making gossip at the time. One day the Princess rebuked Miss Chudleigh for unseemly conduct: the young lady had the audacity to reply, 'Votre Altesse Royale sait que chacune a son But.' Calumny was as fierce against their financial engagements as their moral principles. In 1770 charges brought by Dr. Musgrave were made matter for enquiry by the House of Commons, and the accused were voted not guilty. But Junius declared that they 'sunk under the information'; and it is said that the Duke of Grafton was so lukewarm in their defence that the Princess went with a protest to the King, and so gave the tottering minister a final push out of office. Nothing to be sure was too bad for Bute: he was at once the Princess's companion in fraud and her greedy parasite. In 1763 he was accused of manipulating the Government loan for his own profit: he was openly charged with taking French gold as the price of his acquiescence in the terms of the Peace of Paris. Camden told Wilberforce long afterwards that he was sure this accusation was just. Bute, indeed, spent profusely. Between 1763 and 1767 he built Luton Hoo and the house in Berkeley Square, now known as Lansdowne House. People asked where the money came from. The Princess left him nothing in her will. Walpole says Bute saw her the day before she died, but when the end came she would not have him come.

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If he took her money, he took it whilst she was alive; but his extravagance requires no such explanation. He had his own fortune: his wife in 1761 succeeded to the riches of her father. He liked fine things, and what he did was not beyond the limits of precedent and of reason. He was a collector, and never grudged money in the indulgence of a pursuit that he really loved. But he was not indifferent to a good stroke of business. He sold his precious series of pamphlets to the King: he sold Lansdowne House, before it was finished, for 22,000*l.* to Lord Shelburne.

Bute was not a great minister. He lacked training and experience. Accident put him into the highest office: circumstances made his position there difficult and invidious. He succeeded in the one great object on which his ambitions and affections were fixed. He knew his limitations, and was content then to surrender a post he felt sure he could not hold against assault from all sides. In a loose-living age he chose to be stately: he was a student and a connoisseur. No public man was ever more recklessly abused and accused; but none of the most serious imputations were conclusively proved against him. He was not a very valuable servant of his country; but there have been more insignificant and worthless men in the catalogue of our public characters.

Bute was succeeded in office by a politician of a type wholly dissimilar. Bute was something of an adventurer; his life was a romance with a large

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element of mystery. He would make an admirable subject for a political novel. There was nothing romantic or mysterious about George Grenville. He was born and bred a politician. He was laborious and precise. He would never have done for the hero of a novel: he must have been something of a prig: he was undoubtedly a preposterous bore.

It was no disgrace to Grenville that Bute should have desired to remove him from leadership of the House of Commons. Grenville solved the difficulty by resigning.¹ He was by no means in love with the terms upon which the peace had been arranged. He was not the man to defend it heartily against damaging criticism. More than this: he had experience and knowledge of Parliamentary procedure; but the occasion needed management of a kind in which Grenville was not an adept. Fox was the man for dirty work, and to him the marketing of votes was entrusted. When the bargains had been struck and the goods delivered, the partnership was dissolved; and Grenville came into his own again. Of his administration, Lord Macaulay has said that it was 'the worst that has governed England since the Revolution.'² It would probably have been otherwise had he been allied with Pitt; but enmity had entered into the brotherhood. Pitt and Temple were friends, and they would, for the present, have nothing to do with Grenville.

¹ Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 120.

² *Essays*, iv. 306.

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Temple had no deeply planted root of bitterness, and he presently transferred his allegiance: but there could be little sympathy between the frigid Grenville and his fiery brother-in-law. In the days of Pitt's heroic wars, when he could see nothing but trophies, Grenville, says Lord Macaulay, could see nothing but the bill.¹ Pitt felt for him a contempt that he took no pains to disguise. Where was a tax to be laid if not on cider? pleaded Grenville in the House of Commons: tell me where: tell me where, he repeated. And Pitt, in the words of a favourite song, chanted 'Gentle Shepherd, tell me where!' Grenville's dignity was outraged. He protested; and Pitt, with such a gesture as he alone could use, swept out, the figure of disdain. They met and shook hands before Grenville died, but whilst he was in office, the man who might have been his salvation was his principal source of discomfiture.

The measures with which Grenville's term of office are associated were not of good repute. Wilkes was prosecuted and expelled from Parliament, and there was trouble at home. The Stamp Act for America was passed, and there followed even worse trouble abroad. He got into discredit with the cider tax. He most grievously blundered over the Regency Bill, and contrived to offend everybody who could be offended. He was no avowed Tory, yet his political system ought to

¹ W. S. Landor has a similar phrase: 'Lord Chatham was all romance; Mr. William was all account book.' 'Commentary on Fox,' 72.

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have recommended him to the King. In the case of Wilkes and of the Stamp Act they heartily put their foot in it together. But Grenville was not a pliant being: it was his own, not the King's policy that he pursued. He had no idea of working under the shadow of Bute or the menace of Pitt; and when he found that his master was withholding his confidence and was seeking for a substitute repository, he gave full play to the pompous gravity of his disposition and succeeded, as no other minister was ever destined to succeed, in bringing the King into helpless and humiliating submission.¹

Favour gave way to annoyance and finally hatred. It may be said of Grenville, as it has been said of more than one other man, that he talked to his victim as if he were addressing a public meeting.² One hour, two hours, three hours, with an occasional glance at his watch, would he detain the restless soul who was not the most patient of listeners at any time. The King said he thought he must have choked; and even years afterwards he spoke with horror at the recollection of his sufferings.

After his failure to enlist Pitt, the King found a minister in Rockingham; and Grenville retired. The Stamp Act was repealed and the King dissembled his anger. Not so Grenville. 'If it

¹ The King's surrender in 1783 was due to a combination of forces.

² Bismarck said this of Von Gagern, presumably in 1870, Busch, i. 314.



Painted by Sir John Reynolds

Engraved by G. Fisher

Charles Watson Wentworth.
2nd. Marquess of Rockingham.

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*Charles Watson Wentworth,
Second Marquess of Rockingham.*

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were to be done again I would do it,' he vowed. But his consistency did not endure to the end. In March 1770 Lord North moved to repeal all American duties except the one upon tea. Grenville 'spoke irresolutely and did not vote at all.'¹ On another occasion he said :

'Nothing could ever induce me to tax America again but the united consent of King, Lords, and Commons, supported by the united voice of the people of England. . . . I will never lend my hand towards forging chains for America lest in so doing I should forge them for myself.'

Whether this was the result of experience and reflection,² or the effect of reunion with Chatham, one cannot tell. He had little time to confirm his new resolution. In November 1770 he was dead. But before he died he carried through Parliament a measure which leaves enduring credit with his name. Henceforth election petitions were not to be openly treated as tests of party strength. The political principle was not wiped out, but trials were referred to a small committee of the House elected by ballot and examining on oath, which was perhaps going as far towards the provision of justice as could be hoped for in Parliament and outside the Law Courts. Grenville was not an interesting or successful minister, but he was one of the most conscientious and painstaking.

¹ Stanhope, v. 401.

² He also changed his mind about Wilkes, and voted against his expulsion in 1769.

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The Marquis of Rockingham represents the type of the aristocratic Whig connection that governed England in the eighteenth century. Grenville was avowedly a Whig, but he became a stiff Tory in office. Rockingham could boast consistency in politics, even if in private he uttered some sentiments of which Lord Eldon need not have been ashamed. He was of the line in which Lord John Russell was perhaps the last link; enjoying rank and dignity, and exhibiting symptoms which in our day are regarded as the attributes of the old guard of high Toryism. With Lord John and the Reform Bill came a break in the chain, and new connections had to be found as the changing habits of mankind created new necessities and new creeds.

The instinct of conservatism comes out with maiden freshness in Rockingham's letter to Lord Bessborough about the proposed absentee tax for Ireland in 1773: 'Our property is our own: we have a right to spend it where we please'—a sentiment which was considered very shocking when it was echoed by a noble Duke in 1832. Again, the conservatism of privilege is apparent enough in the letter that he wrote to the Rev. H. Zouch in 1780, when the Yorkshire Whigs were sending up addresses against the war policy of Lord North: 'Yet I think a little attention to the security of property is not beneath the consideration of the gentlemen and freeholders of Yorkshire.' He ended his life a lukewarm

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Reformer, when Pitt's activities compelled him to decide. The Duke of Richmond tried to push him forward, but he clung to another duke of steadier principles, who showed no disposition to trust the people. It was Portland who objected, and saw danger in enfranchising

'persons of improper, because dependent, characters, the worshippers of power and creatures of this new species of representation which it is proposed to give birth to.'

And with him Rockingham took refuge.

Rockingham was thirty-five when he became Prime Minister for the first time. He had great possessions: his character raised him high above the standard of morality that the age required. He was, curiously enough, the only Marquis in the peerage. Granby, who was holding various high offices, had the rank, of course, by courtesy only. One or two other marquises were lurking beneath dukedoms, whence they have since emerged on the extinction of the higher rank:¹ Pitt was yet to promote in England and create in Ireland with lavish patronage.

Rockingham had ample experience; but he had made no progress in the first essential of political equipment. He could not make a speech. It is hardly to be believed that the King could write to his Prime Minister in this wise:

'I am much pleased that opposition has forced

¹ *E.g.*, the 8th Marquess of Huntly was also 5th Duke of Gordon.

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you to hear your own voice, which I hope will encourage you to stand forth in other debates.'

In 1769 the Duke of Richmond wrote :

'It gave me great pleasure to hear that you had exerted yourself to speak in the House . . . it gives me hope that you will get rid of that ill-placed timidity which has hitherto checked you.'

Lord Macaulay has said of the Ministry of 1765-6 that it was one of the best that has ever existed in our country, but one of the weakest. Pitt's refusal to give it the strength of his adhesion has never been satisfactorily explained. The time had not yet come when he and Rockingham differed upon the expediency of yielding independence to the American Colonies. His capricious temper, his secret ambitions, and Temple's influence, served in combination to prevent an accommodation. On general principles he should have been as much in harmony with Rockingham as he had been out of harmony with Grenville.

Rockingham is blessed in Whig tradition. Lord Russell says that much as the Duke of Newcastle had lowered the character of the Whigs, so much and more did Lord Rockingham exalt it. A contemporary critic, and one whose judgment had practical effect, thought poorly of him. It was the King's opinion that he was 'one of the most insignificant noblemen in my service'; and he told Lord Ashburton that 'Lord Rockingham never appeared to him to have a decided opinion about things.' Barré told Shelburne that in a conversa-

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tion with the Duke of Richmond it had been agreed that Rockingham's 'indecision was more fatal than a manly negative.' He certainly did not love responsibility for its own sake; in February 1766 he implored Pitt to come and 'put himself at the head of Administration.' In 1776 he was much blamed for the indecision and want of cohesion in the Opposition,¹ and for yielding to proposals of secession. In 1778 Fox had to protest against his supineness, and urged him not to reject overtures that were opening a road back to office.

Rockingham's achievements in 1765-6 were negative in character, inasmuch as he did little but undo the work of his predecessor; he condemned general warrants; he restored officers deprived of rank for insubordinate voting; he amended the cider tax; more than all these, he repealed the Stamp Act. In so doing he passed a resolution that put on record England's claim to authority over the Colonies in respect both of legislation and taxation. This he did partly to carry with him the House of Commons; and so far he succeeded: partly to conciliate the King; and here he failed. There was nothing in it repugnant to his own feelings. In 1768 he wrote to the Collector of Customs at Boston:

'The Declaratory Bill which we brought in to fix and ascertain the rights of this country over its colonies is what I must and shall ever adhere to.'

He was wrong here. There was a time when

¹ *Memoirs*, ii. 297.

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he was disposed to halt between two opinions, but in the end he was as whole-hearted an advocate of independence as the Duke of Richmond himself. The record of his first twelve months of office was certainly not barren, if it was not constructive or original ; and it was remarkable for this, that he took his stand on an oasis of political purity in the desert of corruption, where ministers and members were wont to trade in votes. If he was irresolute, he was not without ideas ; and he possessed something of the obstinacy of weak natures. He was given at all times to signing protests in the House of Lords when he found himself outvoted. When Wilkes appealed to him for protection in 1766 his love of liberty was not sufficiently strong to impel him into action ; but he took a more convenient opportunity of displaying his sympathies by visiting Crosby and Oliver in prison during the reporting agitation. And it was during his second term of office that the resolutions concerning Wilkes were expunged from the records of the House of Commons.

Rockingham was Prime Minister again for a few weeks in 1782. He came in now fairly on his merits. The King would have done without him if he could, but Rockingham was strong enough, not only to be inevitable, but to insist on his own terms. He even compelled the King to pledge himself not to veto the independence of America. But his days were to be few and rather evil. He suffered from influenza—‘the disorder, so uni-

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versally prevalent,' he wrote, 'afflicts me so violently that at times I am not completely in possession of myself.' Wraxall says vaguely that it was 'influenza, a species of epidemic distemper.' Rockingham's sufferings were made worse by the aggressive conduct of Shelburne, who treated him as his rival rather than his chief. He made his short innings notable by giving to Ireland the independence of Parliament that her politicians were demanding; but this, his one conspicuous legislative adventure, was within two decades to be undone, even as he had undone all Grenville's work seventeen years before. He succeeded, however, in disfranchising the host of revenue officers, who were expected to vote for the King's candidates as punctually as they collected his customs duties. He died in office, before he had time to complete negotiations for peace with America and her allies.

Rockingham left little trace in history on his own account, but indirectly he should be immortal in the tradition of Edmund Burke. He had the sagacity to detect genius and turn it to account: and in the epitaph that Burke composed for the mausoleum at Wenworth is enshrined Rockingham's most enviable memorial:

'He far exceeded all other statesmen in the art of drawing together without the seduction of self-interest the concurrence and co-operation of various dispositions and abilities of men, whom he assimilated to his character and associated in his labours.'

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It is equally difficult to do justice to Burke in a few lines and to pass him by unnoticed. He has, indeed, been overpraised. He was a genius and a great genius: as a thinker inferior to few; as a writer inferior to none. As a speaker he was never master of the House of Commons, with all his golden eloquence. As a politician he was inconsistent, illogical, and ineffective. As a man he was liable to many aspersions: his judgment was faulty and his temper, at times, wild and ungovernable. His friend Windham wrote of him in 1792 that he

‘is decried, persecuted, and proscribed; not being much valued, even by his own party, and by half the nation considered as little better than an ingenious madman.’¹

Yet Sheridan said of him:

‘I am sure that Charles Fox, and much more my humble self, will be known to future ages as having stood by the side of Burke.’²

He is belauded as an ardent and large-minded Whig. He ended as a frantic reactionary Tory; but Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, declared that long before the French Revolution had made Burke furious, he himself had regarded him as ‘a High Churchman in religion and a Tory, perhaps indeed an aristocratic Tory in the State.’ He came from Ireland to seek his fortunes in London. He became a barrister without a brief; but he speedily

¹ Windham Papers, i. 97.

² Lord Broughton's *Recollections of a Long Life*, i. 200.

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found his true vocation in writing. Besides his greater and more famous works, he was for many years the historian of the country in the *Annual Register*. In 1763 he went back to Ireland as private secretary to 'single-speech' Hamilton, the Chief Secretary. They quarrelled, and Burke resigned. In 1765 he became private secretary to Rockingham, and M.P. for Wendover, by favour of Lord Verney, to whom he was introduced by William Burke, 'that mysterious person . . . a namesake, but perhaps no kinsman,' as Lord Morley calls him. There is good reason for suspecting that William Burke, whoever he was, exercised an evil influence over Edmund. He was an adventurous soul, living by his wits. In 1787 we read of him at Bussora,¹ presumably trading in the Persian Gulf. In 1783 he was installed as agent with the Rajah of Tanjore. At the time when he helped to bring Edmund into Parliament, he was speculating at home. As early as 1768 Edmund bought Beaconsfield, and it is not unreasonable to ask how he was in a position to buy anything. Rockingham is known to have aided him generously and often; but he could not have encouraged this extravagance. Lord Verney, William Burke, and Richard Burke, Edmund's brother, were all gambling in East India stock, and all came to grief.² Lord Morley deprecates enquiry into private affairs as impertinent curiosity,

¹ Robinson to Sullivan, Abergavenny Papers, Hist. MSS. Com.

² *Burke*, by John Morley, 33.

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but it would be worth knowing if in truth the austere moralist was rising in life on the treacherous hazard of a Stock Exchange adventure.

Edmund Burke was always hungry for money, and in some of his transactions he was far from enjoying a spotless reputation as an incorruptible defender of the right. In 1771 he accepted the post of paid agent for New York—‘with doubtful propriety,’ says Mr. Lecky. The salary is variously stated to have been between 500*l.* and 700*l.* a year. In 1774, so Walpole relates, Burke was anxious to get a concession for his nephew to purchase land at St. Vincent’s. Fox was to put the business through and take a share of the profits. North refused to have anything to do with it. Fox then quarrelled with North and resigned. The story got about, and it was rumoured that he had been dismissed for robbing the Treasury.¹ This may have been Walpole’s imagination; but Lord Morley admits that Burke was said to be deeply interested in land at St. Vincent’s.² In 1775 Walpole wrote to Conway of ‘the incorruptible Burke who scorns lucre except when he can buy 100,000 acres from naked Caribs for a song.’ But Burke did not despise lucre, and a few years later Walpole had cause to know it. In 1782 Burke was appointed Paymaster with a salary of 4000*l.* His first act was to restore two clerks whom his predecessor had been obliged to cashier—‘an indefensible error of judgment,’ says Lord Morley.

¹ *Last Journals*, i. 321.

² *Burke*, 48.

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His next step was to appoint his son Deputy with a salary of 500*l.* When he found his own career in office was likely to be short, he came to Horace Walpole with a scheme by which Sir Edward Walpole, for a consideration, was to part with his clerkship of the Pells. According to one version Burke was to take it himself;¹ but Horace Walpole avers that young Burke confided to him that his father had always intended the place for the son, and had therefore excluded it from the provisions of his economic reform bill—‘my father always intended to get this for me; therefore the Clerk of Pells omitted; you won’t mention this.’² Horace Walpole was indignant and described it as a frantic proposal. Nothing came of it.

When Burke went out with the Government he frankly confessed his sorrow to the House: he liked the work, he told them; and what was more he liked the salary, because it enabled him to provide for his family. It is recorded that Grafton had wished to give him office in 1766; that Chatham had objected; and that Burke never forgave him:³ but his biographer prints a letter from which he is justified in drawing the conclusion that Burke refused the invitation, not liking the conditions.⁴ This self-denial is claimed as an instance of his habitual indifference to his own interests. A better case is made out of his acceptance of the Paymaster’s Office in 1782 with

¹ *Memorials of Fox*, i. 451.

² *Last Journals*, ii. 554.

³ Stanhope, v. 260.

⁴ *Life of Burke*, by Prior, i. 174.

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a fixed salary and without the opportunities of intercepting the vast sums on which Henry Fox had been allowed to grow rich: but it would have been beyond the genius even of Burke to have reconciled the practice of Fox with his own preaching upon economic reform. He undoubtedly liked money, and was not prudish about its source of origin: but if he could look beyond next quarter's salary he was essentially a party man. Shelburne never wearied of proclaiming the principle of 'measures, not men,' as became a disciple of Chatham. Burke denounced this as a subterfuge by which politicians might 'get loose from every honourable engagement,' and he was unswervingly loyal to Rockingham and Fox, until death deprived him of one and the French Revolution came between him and the other. In the cause of friendship or of enmity he could even let money go. In 1782 we may say he did the former. In 1763 he had given up his pension on the Irish establishment because he had quarrelled with Hamilton; not because he scrupled to be a tax on his native land. In 1788, when plots were afoot to form a Regency Government, every one was anxious to promote Burke, but it was understood that there were difficulties in the way. This is generally quoted as an example of the rigid laws of privilege which confined the highest offices to the highest birth, regardless of merit.¹ Lord Morley thinks that the Prince of

¹ This view is not disputed by Prior, i. 403.

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Wales was incapable of appreciating Burke: but there was nothing about Burke's politics to render him offensive; and in respect of intellect, the Prince may well have entertained or affected the same admiration for him as he professed for Sir Walter Scott. There is another possible explanation. Burke displayed a growing tendency to indiscretion. He was excitable, erratic, and often incapable of self-control.¹ His patrons and friends, accustomed to more sedate and sober ways, may have feared to trust him with too much authority. They were glad enough to have such a bright political star shining in their firmament, but they would rather not have the ordered constellation to which they belonged put into danger or confusion by one of the shooting species, no matter how brilliant and beautiful in its evolutions.

At all events, Burke was to be sent back to the Pay Office, but this time he was to be consoled with a large Irish pension, and the Duke of Portland, in building these air castles—for they never took solid form—vowed that he 'grudged the honour to Ireland,' a sarcasm which Burke must have enjoyed as little as he liked being mocked by disappointment. In the end he was as rapacious as ever. His son was dead: he no longer cared for a peerage: but he welcomed a pension of 2000*l.*, granted by the Crown, and only complained that it was not voted by Parliament.

¹ *Pitt*, by J. H. Rose, 559.

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He would probably have had better reason for annoyance if the proposal had come before Parliament, for there were plenty of critics, as it was, to point out that he was not acting up to his professions about sinecures and pensions.

But consistency, if it be a virtue, was not amongst the virtues of Burke. Lord Brougham says :

‘ It would, indeed, be difficult to select one leading principle or prevailing sentiment in Mr. Burke’s latest writings, to which something extremely adverse may not be found in his former, we can hardly say his early works, excepting only on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, to which . . . he was from the beginning adverse.’

His views on this subject are not easy to unravel. His economic reform bills aimed at limiting, amongst other things, the political influence of the territorial magnates and rich nabobs. On the other hand, he would entrust no power to the lowly and the oppressed. Any violent change, he said, would upset the constitution, by which he set great store. He spoke of the corruption and profligacy of the lower orders and pronounced them incapable of forming an opinion on any particular measure or even on a general principle. He could even desire ‘ by lessening the number to add to the weight and independency of our voters.’ He was opposed to annual or triennial Parliaments, and he would not exclude placemen. Yet he favoured publication of debates and desired that

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constituents should keep a close watch upon their members. Finally, he lays down this principle, which seems to contradict all that has gone before :

‘I see no other way for the decent attention to public interest in the public representatives, but the interposition of the body of the people itself,’

to which body he has already denied the right to vote. It was the subsequent interposition of the body of the people in French politics that he abhorred and denounced with all the hot impulse of his heart and head.

In respect of India, likewise, Burke’s attitude was in course of time reversed. During the first seven years of his parliamentary service he displayed a conservative reluctance to interfere with the East India Company or to reduce their powers of control. In May 1773 he stoutly defended Lord Clive. But the rage and the personal animus that he threw into his onslaught upon Warren Hastings in later years are hardly less memorable than his paroxysms of wrath over the French Revolution.

There is this to be said about Burke: in the days of nomination boroughs and of burlesque elections, he went through the ordeal which modern politicians find so grievous. From 1774 to 1780 he represented Bristol, and his constituents pestered him with their private affairs and claimed from him public service without mercy. Finally, they resented his support of Catholic Emancipation and

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Lord North's measures of relief to Irish trade, and would have no more of him. His colleague was less unaccommodating : he was always ready to vote as his constituents directed, and it was upon this confession that Burke made one of his most celebrated speeches, which, as a specimen of his style, may be inserted here :

‘ Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him ; their opinions, high respect ; their business, unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs ; and, above all, ever and in all cases to prefer their interests to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, to any set of men living. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment ; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion. . . . You choose a member indeed, but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but a member of Parliament. . . . My worthy colleague says his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours without question ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment, and not of inclination ; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another decide, and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear

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the arguments? . . . Authoritative instructions, mandates issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest convictions of his judgment and conscience—these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenour of our Constitution.’

We return now to the Prime Ministers. After Rockingham came the Duke of Grafton. He was little more than thirty and he had not got rid of the exuberance of youth. He loved hunting and racing; and he had no scruple in appearing at the opera with his mistress, Nancy Parsons. His first wife ran away from him; but he married again with better results, and ended his days as the pious author of a defence of Unitarianism. He was not without ability. Camden considered him second only to Chatham as a debater. Fox thought him worth having as a colleague. When the Duke left North’s Government in 1775, Fox wrote :

‘I cannot let this opportunity go by of assuring you how very happy I feel to be of opinion, on public affairs, with a person with whom I have always wished to agree and with whom I should act with more pleasure in any possible situation than with any one I have been acquainted with.’

Grafton was bent on opposition sure enough; but he was not seduced by these blandishments. In February 1783 he went so far as to object to Shelburne’s endeavour to bring Fox back into the Government.

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On one occasion he appeared as a diplomatist and achieved a qualified success. In 1769 a French ship in the Downs refused to salute one of King George's vessels. Shots were fired, and war was threatened. Lord Weymouth, as usual, shrank from the responsibilities of his office, and begged Grafton to take the business into his own hands. Grafton was no Chatham, and was disposed to give in; but he was a better man than Weymouth, and he plucked up courage to speak stoutly to the French Ambassador. He warned him not to seek occasion in the disturbed and mutinous state of the country; all our internal troubles 'would vanish on the breaking out of war . . . for the honour of the flag.' This argument he contrived to make convincing, and it led to a truly ingenious solution of the problem. It was agreed that the French officer concerned must not be condemned unheard. He had recently departed to the East Indies on a three years' appointment; there was no need to recall him; the matter could stand over until his return; possibly the situation might then have become less difficult. So it was decided; and needless to say the episode was presently forgotten.

Grafton had no great genius for friendship: he had a good many quarrels; but in these he found no pleasure, as do morbid men. He was a disciple of Chatham and to him was entrusted the task of trying to bring in his chief to strengthen Rockingham's Government in the spring of 1766. He went

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to Hayes and pleaded earnestly. For his own part he was ready to agree to any conditions, not excepting the removal of Rockingham from the first place. To this, however, Newcastle, Bedford, and the Rockingham Whigs would be no party. Chatham had said his last word, and finding him obdurate, Grafton himself resigned office. He came in as head of the next Government; but he never questioned the supremacy of Chatham, and when Chatham fell ill and disappeared, he lamented the necessity of assuming the responsibility of leadership. He was entrusted with Chatham's proxy in the House of Lords.

Then came Chatham's eclipse, from which he emerged no longer a member of the Government, and ready to enter into ardent opposition. He was 'cold and rude' to Grafton. Camden endeavoured to bring him into a more amiable mood, but not to much purpose: and Grafton was grievously hurt. So far contemporary evidence: yet Grafton writing ten years later says, 'I found him perfectly open and communicative to me directly; and so we remained towards each other as long as Lord Chatham lived': from which we gather that he had no resentful or brooding habit of mind.

When Chatham reappeared, Camden left the Government and rejoined his flag. He seems not to have loved him, but to have been incapable of withstanding his influence. So Grafton lost another friend; but two years later, in 1771, came a letter of reconciliation; Grafton did not hesitate to respond,

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and thence ensued a regular correspondence in which the Duke is revealed as a man of sense and urbanity. Camden's letters are full of mournful observations on the progress of the war :

‘ I am persuaded it will be the fate of England to stoop though I don't know the ministry to apply so humiliating a remedy,’

he wrote as early as January 1776. In August he made the shrewd reflection,

‘ It your Grace should see a French war to grow out of this civil dispute which I expect and believe to be unavoidable . . . ’

And three years later he wrote in despair,

‘ I have no hopes left for the public : the whole people have betrayed themselves and are not worth fighting for.’

One cannot refrain from quoting in this connection a sentence from a letter written in very evil days, a generation later, by Captain Moore, R.N., about his brother, the General : ‘ The most cheerful fellow on politics is my brother Jack ; you'll hear no croaking from him.’¹ Camden was not a Sir John Moore. In a generation of croakers Grafton was not an optimist. He had had no suspicion of the coming storm in America. He never doubted the justice and propriety of imposing taxes. In 1763 he used the dubious argument that the Americans were already making contribution with

¹ *Creevey Papers*, i. 18.

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every coat, shoe, and saddle that they imported. When his eyes were opened, he spoke in amazement. Of the Customs House regulations of 1767 he said :

‘I was not aware of this mistrust and jealousy which this appointment would bring on, nor the mischief of which it was the source: otherwise it would never have had my consent.’

And of Townshend’s taxes :

‘I must confess my want of foresight . . . the right of the mother country to impose taxes on the colonies was then so generally admitted that scarcely any one thought of questioning it, though a few years afterwards it was given up as indefensible by everybody.’

In May 1769 he was outvoted in his own Cabinet when he proposed to include tea in the list of taxes to be surrendered: but he was not to go into opposition for some years yet. He was not a strong man and he found it difficult to take a strong line. As early as 1767 he had offered to resign. The King ordered him to ‘invite Lord Rockingham to form a Government.’ Rockingham would not move without the Bedfords: the Bedfords insisted on bringing in Grenville: Grenville made impossible stipulations about reasserting the rights of Great Britain over America. Moreover, the King shied at the vision of Grenville, and the negotiations failed. It was thought that the Duke was not sorry in his heart. He liked office: but he neither liked nor was capable

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of exercising the duties of first minister. Townshend, as long as he lived, led him where he liked and left him responsible for the taxing of America. He retained his post until 1770, when, according to Lord Brougham,

‘in a moment of considerable public difficulty and embarrassment, of what, in those easy days of fair weather, was called danger, he suddenly threw up the seals and retired to his diversions and his mistress at Newmarket.’

In 1771 he came into North's Government half-heartedly : he accepted the Privy Seal, but refused to be of the Cabinet, because he mistrusted the drift of its policy. By 1775 he had lost all sympathy with the Government. The last straw was laid when he told the King some home truths about the employment of German troops in America ; twice the number, he said, would only increase the disgrace and do no good. Next day his Privy Seal was required of him. Thenceforward he was for conceding all that the Americans demanded ; and as he had been opposed to peace with France in 1762 because he thought it was our duty to go on fighting, so now he was opposed to war with America because he thought it was our duty to make peace. An attempt to bring him back in 1779 was abortive. When North fell in 1782, Grafton came back as Privy Seal with Rockingham, and he remained with Shelburne, but he was not disposed to concede to him the deference that had been

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Chatham's due: 'I never considered his lordship but as holding the principle office in the Cabinet,' he said; and on February 19th he waited on the King to tender his resignation in person. A week later Shelburne resigned, and during the confusion and intriguing of the next five weeks Grafton took his share in the making and rejecting of overtures; but when Portland's terms were granted and the crisis ended, the King sent for the Privy Seal which Grafton had offered to resign, and, although he lived until 1811, he was never a minister again.

Grafton was unlucky in incurring the particular hatred of Junius, who reserved for him the hottest vials of his burning spite. Some of his attacks are nothing but the rabid cursings of a maniac. It is not known that Francis bore Grafton any personal grudge. The relentlessness of the onslaught has been explained on the supposition that Junius was Temple, who was stung by jealousy and indignation at Chatham's alliance with Grafton and his own insignificance.¹ If Junius was Charles Lloyd, Grenville's secretary; or if Junius was Francis, inspired by Grenville and Temple through Lloyd, as Lord Albemarle believed,² the motive would be apparent. Whatever the reason was, it ensured for Grafton the misfortune of being best known as the object of the most bitter diatribes that have ever had a

¹ *Memoirs of the Duke of Grafton*, xxxii.

² *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 149.

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lasting attraction for readers of history. Grafton was something of a poor creature, but he deserved a less humiliating fate than that. He was not so happy as Rockingham, who had an even more illustrious author to recommend him to posterity.

CHAPTER VII

THE AMERICAN WAR

I

NO student of history can fail to observe how numerous and obvious are the features of resemblance between the American War of 1775–1783 and the South African War of 1899–1902. Not less is it to be remarked that in the elements and issues of chief importance they were sharply contrasted. In the first case the avowed cause of quarrel was the unjust treatment of Americans by the home Government. In the latter case the situation was reversed ; the grievance asserted was the unjust treatment of Englishmen by the South African Government. In America we were defeated ; in South Africa we were not. The terms of peace in South Africa were accepted with a general concurrence of approval that was astonishing ; the peace of 1783 was the object of something like execration. Incidentally it should be noted that in South Africa we were spared the added trouble of an irruption of native warriors on either side ; in America the employment of savages was practised and denounced by both parties concerned. In America

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there was foreign intervention ; in South Africa there was not.

The conspicuous points of resemblance were these. The magnitude of the task in hand was not appreciated when the American war began, and confidence was inspired by advice that came from men with local knowledge and experience. One or two illustrations will suffice. In February 1775 Colonel Grant, who had served in America, told the House of Commons that it was his opinion that the Americans would 'recede if we showed spirit.' In April, Rigby assured the same audience that 'it was romantic to think that the Americans would fight.' A year earlier the King had written to North :

'I have seen Lt. Gen. Gage: he says they will be lyons whilst we are lambs; but if we take a resolute part they will undoubtedly prove very meek.'

Sir George Trevelyan says, 'it is the bare truth that his own governors and lieutenant-governors wrote King George out of America;' and he quotes Macaulay's verdict that it was imprudence and obstinacy that broke the ties between America and the parent State.

In both cases the principle of independence was involved. In both cases charges of mismanagement and muddle were brought against the War Office; Lord Barrington, Secretary at War, writing about some troops which were being brought from Ireland for service in America, added, 'I am not

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apprised where they are going.' Our generals were severely criticised. One would like to claim for North the immortal confession, 'I don't know what effect they may produce upon the enemy, but before God they make me tremble.' It has been ascribed to him; he was capable of saying it, and the crisis might easily have moved him; but we cannot contradict so practised a gossip as Wraxall, who gives the credit to Sir Robert Walpole in 1740.¹ When the French alliance became inevitable, Lord Barrington advised the King to secure the services of Ferdinand of Brunswick; we had no more generals to turn to.

It was obvious that the Americans had no trained and disciplined army. To this extent anticipations were justified. A staff officer was to be found discharging the functions of camp barber. Another officer was broke for stealing his men's blankets. In some corps men refused to serve unless they might elect their own officers. But it must be remembered that this was in a land where the language of equality, if not the practice, was observed. 'Is your master at home?' asked a visitor at some house. 'My master!' replied the servant; 'I have no master but Jesus Christ. John So-and-so is at home.' On these grounds were based the expectations of cowardice and collapse: but here the prophets were proved false.

During both wars rumours of negotiations and

¹ Wraxall, ii. 421.

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peace were current. Walpole writes of them in September 1776. In the bitterness of the conflict charges of treachery were made, but not always upon irrefutable evidence. At Morristown in 1781 English envoys were seized and hanged as spies. One Hayne, who had sworn the oath of allegiance to the English, was taken in arms with the enemy and was hanged. This Greene, the American General, denounced as an inhuman insult—albeit his countrymen had no other punishment for André when they caught him. In 1779 Washington vowed that rather than lay down his arms he would first retreat beyond the Susquehanna River; then, if necessary, retire into the Alleghany Mountains where the royal troops would search for him in vain;¹ which is what we were told would be the strategy of the Boer Army if Pretoria were to fall.

In both cases there was much misunderstanding and talking at cross purposes. The *Westminster Gazette* cartoon of October 21st, 1899, represented President Kruger and Mr. Chamberlain exchanging telegrams: one has changed his 'yes' into 'no'; the other his 'no' into 'yes.' There was the same ambiguity in the demands and the sentiments that went to and fro a century and a quarter sooner. 'You must repeal her fears and her resentments,' said Chatham on January 20th, 1775, 'and you may then hope for her love and gratitude'; yet Chatham with

¹ *British North America (the English People Overseas)*, A. Wyatt Tilby, 19.

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his dying breath declared against independence. Were love and gratitude to be secured on any other terms? Even after the fighting at Lexington, Congress professed its willingness to treat: they were loyal to the King, not to Parliament; which was a hard saying, and not easy to fit in with our constitutional government. In 1774 Washington said that no reflecting person wished for independence. Franklin had said no less. Dickenson opposed independence in Congress. Was there a possible solution on these conditions; or were Adams and the independence party implacable and irresistible from the first? Had either side cleared its mind of cant and made sure what it wanted to have and what it was willing to forego? A letter preserved amongst Lord Dartmouth's papers seems to describe the situation with tolerable clearness and to revive memories of 1899.

JOHN PENN TO WILLIAM BAKER.

'Philadelphia, June 5, 1775.

' . . . The conciliatory resolution proposed by Lord North has been very ill received here and is looked upon to have nothing in it that can in the least tend to settle the unhappy Differences. . . . There are, as I am well informed, at least 20,000 men (in Massachusetts) who have been exercising almost every day for a month or six weeks past, among whom are many who have served all the last war . . . besides a great number of Germans who have been in different services in their own country. . . . Even the Quakers have two corps. . . . It seems to be universally believed that there is a fixed design to enslave this country, and People

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of all Ranks are determined not to part with what they call Liberty, except with their lives. . . . The people everywhere seem to be desperate . . . the Idea of their Cowardice . . . has served greatly to irritate them and has contributed to raise the Spirit of the People here who have a high notion of their own Courage. . . . My situation¹ is a very disagreeable one, it being totally out of my power to put a stop to the present current. . . . It is now become dangerous to commit one's sentiments to writing.'

In both wars the conduct of those who were loyal to England caused infinite anxiety on one side and resentment on the other. After the surrender at Saratoga, and even in the final settlement of peace, they were left naked to their enemies. Sir George Trevelyan, who holds no brief for them, declares that they could hope for no tenderness or mercy.² Whenever General Howe made one of his retreats, those who had joined him as he advanced suffered the full penalty of the chances of war. It was not easy for England to protect the loyalists in the agitated days that preceded the struggle: it was impossible for her to defend them when she was in the position of the defeated suppliant.

It will be remembered that during the South African war our drooping spirits were cheered with the assurance that one good result of victory would be that in future the British Exchequer would be relieved by the contributions of South Africa for

¹ He was Lieut.-Governor of Pennsylvania.

² *American Revolution*, i. 285, note.

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their own government. So Walpole records that the country gentlemen were assured that conquest would mean relief from taxation through the imposing of new charges on America.

When the difficulties of the undertaking became apparent, it happened in both wars that the language in home use became lugubrious and despondent, not without prompting from letters from the scene of operations. Captain Fitzpatrick wrote to Lord Ossory that the country was so hilly and the enemy were such good marksmen that it was almost impossible to catch them. Before fighting began, officers had complained of the truculent behaviour of some of the Americans. For example, Ashton Shuttleworth wrote to his uncle from Boston at the end of 1774 in these words :

‘We are at present doing nothing with the Bostonians, but they are doing what they please with us, by enticing our people to desert and abusing officers whenever they take a ride into the country. . . . They get in Bodys about the Dusk of the Evening and whenever they get one or two Officers by themselves, they will abuse and knock them down if they can. We have had several Officers confined to their Beds by them and no Notice taken of it by Gen^l Gage though reported to him frequently. . . . They talk greatly of starving us all out this winter when the severe weather sets in.’¹

This can be compared with the complaints that were made by the Outlanders of 1899 of the

¹ *Annals of a Yorkshire House*, i. 341.

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indignities to which they were put by the arrogant Boers.

But it was believed that once our troops and our generals appeared in force, resistance would melt away. Before long a letter from the same camp was bringing the uncomfortable tidings that

‘the American army and navy are becoming more powerful and various than ever was expected. The enthusiasm which prevails throughout the continent, added to the hostile Ideas, will give us a cruel and arduous task to bring them to a sense of their duty to the Mother country ; even to attempt that we must have a larger reinforcement from Europe or the cause must drop.’

The ‘Pro-Boers’ and ‘Stop-the-war’ party had their prototypes. It is true that North’s Government seemed to retain the support of the country, even so late as the General Election of 1780 ; but amongst the unenfranchised, at all events, there was more or less aversion. John Wesley told Lord Dartmouth at the outset that there was no enthusiasm in the country : trade was bad, unemployment general ;

‘the bulk of the people in every city do not so much aim at ministry, but at the King himself. They heartily despise his Majesty and hate him with a perfect hatred.’

There was no strong emotion of patriotism. Newcastle sent a petition signed by twelve hundred against the war : less than two hundred could be found to sign a counter-petition ; yet the borough

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returned two supporters of Lord North.¹ In naval and military circles there was unconcealed disaffection. Lord Chatham removed his son from the army rather than allow him to fight against the Americans. Keppel, Amherst, Conway, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Lord Effingham, and private gentlemen, such as Mr. Bosville, of Thorpe Hall, declared at various times and places that they would not serve in the war. Captain Fitzpatrick wrote to Lord Ossory: 'Nothing in the world could be so disagreeable and odious to me as being obliged to serve in this execrable war.' General Howe had told his constituents that under no circumstances would he serve against his fellow-countrymen. His subsequent appointment he accounted for on the ground that he had been 'commanded'; and there have been writers who allege that his dilatory conduct throughout was in large measure due to his unwillingness to press too hard upon the enemy. A Virginian colonel is said to have summed up the situation in an epigram: 'General Howe held a mortgage on the American army but decided not to foreclose.'² A recent historian is very severe upon the General:

'If Howe was ever incapable,' he says, 'it was when undergoing reaction from drink and debauch . . . (he had a mistress who betrayed him) . . . this daughter of America was among the best and truest patriots . . . he had an interest of an active kind in a big shop or store in New York. . . . On his return after three years' absence . . . he

¹ Trevelyan, iii. 205.

² Tilby, 75.

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was broken in reputation, an object of dislike and distrust to his fellow-countrymen, as one who was thought to have betrayed his countrymen. His excuses . . . excited a notion . . . that he never meant to bring the war to a close by military means.¹

And he is of opinion that the Admiral was not less deliberately and culpably tardy. This is to criticise something in the manner of an Old Bailey advocate : but the same charges have been made in more temperate language. Sir George Trevelyan says that General Howe

‘regarded the conflict between Great Britain and her Colonies as a civil war in which Britain was in the wrong . . . he took up his command with a sore heart and an uneasy conscience’ ;

which was obviously not the spirit in which to seek after victory. One may hesitate to write him down a traitor ; but there was much in his conduct that was manifestly blameworthy ; and his habitual vacillation and sluggishness are not easily explained away. He was not an incapable officer : he must have been lacking in ardour. An impartial observer, General du Portail, could write of him that had he only advanced after the battle of Brandywine, ‘il ne serait plus question de l’armée de General Washington.’ It may be pleaded that he must run no risks with an army too small for his purpose and not capable of rapid and adequate expansion ; but he can hardly escape condemnation for having frequently violated the

¹ *The First American Civil War*, Henry Belcher, chapter xiii.

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rule of war that a success should be followed up and consummated immediately. The tradition lingered. Years afterwards, William Windham in a letter to Mrs. Crewe protested against current aspersions on the character of Lord Howe, who was fighting the French at sea: 'I should set down your correspondent as some Tory clergyman who had learnt to abuse the Howes because they did not conquer America.'¹

With these examples before us it is easy to believe that there was a large element of disapprobation existing in the country; but we must not forget that it is the malcontents that are heard. The larger portion of the community—certainly the majority of voters and of those who were not going to suffer in pocket—thought that their country was in the right, and that the rebellious colonists must be taught manners. Sir George Trevelyan, who is at pains to show that the war was universally unpopular, goes on to say that unfortunate loyalists who fled hither, counting on succour and applause, found themselves insulted and shunned as specimens of an unruly and mischievous people. One complained that he was saluted by a Bristol female as a damned American rebel.²

Men like Horne Tooke, who hated the Government, were of course eager to fish in troubled waters. This erratic man, after the first exchange of shots, sent Franklin 100*l.* for the 'widows and

¹ *Windham Papers*, i. 193.

² iii. 240.

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orphans of our beloved American fellow-subjects inhumanly murdered by the King's troops at or near Lexington and Concord.' Walpole records that the successes of British arms next year 'much alarmed the friends of liberty'; and there undoubtedly were many who believed in their hearts that if the American revolt were crushed, the power of the Crown at home would be strengthened to the degree of arbitrary and absolute government. In September 1775 a meeting of protest was held at Mile End: there was a division of opinion and much heat, which so greatly perplexed and alarmed Alderman Plomer that he signed all the resolutions submitted. In 1778 the Court of Common Council refused a subscription to bounties for raising new levies, and carried a resolution against the continuance of the war.

Amongst politicians there were many who thought the Government were going wrong, as their descendants thought in 1899, and who incurred suspicion of disloyalty by a confession of their misgivings. Fox, as his habit was, sided consistently and heartily with the enemies of his country; rejoicing at their successes, sorrowing at their reverses.

Less prejudiced minds opened themselves in 1774 when North introduced his punitive measures. Dowdeswell said that the Administration's 'wise heads had brought to a crisis the trial for power between this country and America' Barré predicted that

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‘a foreign enemy must take us in the midst of our operations . . . if the scabbard was thrown away we must point the whole weight of the British Empire against the American colonies.’

Burke declared that Ministers had had their song of exultation not even before victory, but before battle. Conway thought

‘these measures would involve those who had conduct of them in such difficulties as they would not get the better of . . . the flame could never be laid: the expense could not be maintained. If once engaged in a war with America we should see no end to it.’

Even Barrington, Secretary at War, wrote next year:

‘As it is the measure of Government to have a large army in North America, it is my duty and inclination to make that measure to succeed to the utmost; though my opinion always has been and still is that the Americans may be reduced by the Fleet but never can be by the Army.’

The Duke of Richmond, who was stoutly opposed to the war from first to last, said in 1776 that the Americans were no longer rebels: they were resisting acts of unexampled cruelty and oppression: they never could be subdued except at ruinous expense, and by continuing the war they would see the Americans forced into alliance with the French: if, indeed, they were subdued they would take the first opportunity of revolting again and choosing the moment when Great

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Britain was in trouble. 'Whatever happens in America, this country is undone,' wrote Walpole at the same time. The judicious Gibbon, who had written to Holroyd in 1775, 'I am more and more convinced that with firmness all may go well; yet I sometimes doubt'; wrote in 1777, 'They have almost lost the appellation of rebels': and 'there seems to be a universal desire for peace, even on the most humble conditions': again, 'I believe you will find yourself obliged to carry on this glorious war almost alone. . . . A general cry for peace.' As the war went on, and the prospect grew more gloomy, there was undoubtedly a weakening of the resolution that the nation had at the outset displayed. The King wrote to North in 1779 to complain that the motions of Opposition in Parliament 'only raise the drooping spirit of America.' He was doggedly convinced that their resistance was collapsing. His confidence in a quick and happy issue had only been qualified by the fact that he never countenanced the tattle about American cowardice.¹

Upon all this evidence we should conclude that the war was never popular to the point of enthusiasm; and that although political life was so far stagnant that Government seemed to be supported by a general acquiescence, yet it was their war; not the people's war. The people generally approved. They resented the idea of

¹ Trevelyan, ii. 69.

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being defied and deserted by their colonies : but it was not one of the occasions when they drove the Government into war as they drove Walpole into war with Spain.

The true sentiments of Lord North we shall endeavour to disclose elsewhere. In the present connection it will be enough to take note of two things. He had so far back as the year 1770 used the significant phrase, 'if but there had been a union of England in the cause of England' : and in January 1774, when Wedderburn's onslaught upon Franklin was received with delighted jeering, it was observed that North alone was glum and silent. He shrewdly suspected that this was playing with fire.

There remains to be noticed another point of resemblance between the two wars ; and it is this. In South Africa the security of the Boers depended on the subjugation of the native races. Under pressure from them, they must in the last resource rely upon the succour of England. In America the Colonies had hitherto lived more or less at the mercy of the French ; and when the power of France was broken, the principal necessity for reliance on British protection was taken away. After the loss of Canada, Vergennes, then French Ambassador at Constantinople, uttered this remarkable prophecy :

'England will soon repent having removed the only check that can keep her colonies in awe. They stand no longer in need of protection. She

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will call on them to contribute towards supporting the burdens they have helped to bring on her, and they will answer by striking off all dependence.'

Further similarity may be traced in the fact that both wars were declared upon one chosen and avowed issue, but that there were other causes of friction lurking behind, that had been long in operation. Here, however, there is no close parallel. In South Africa the foundation of trouble was rivalry of two races. In America it was a domestic difference of a family not yet broken up. In both cases there was an accumulation of grievances. In South Africa, a feud between neighbour and neighbour; in America, a quarrel between father and son. Not for the first time a family was to split upon money. But other jealousies and resentments had long been in operation. As far back as 1761 the Americans had been incensed by the issue of 'writs of assistance' for the purpose of checking smuggling. This was resented as Wilkes and his friends resented the issue of general warrants. There was another long-drawn-out conflict in the arena where conflict has ever been most fierce; the establishment and status of the Church. The Dissenting element was very large, and they had no mind to have the Church of the Establishment claiming supreme authority. Within the Establishment there was a complaint, not against their neighbours, but the home Government. There was no

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American Bishop; and Americans who wished to be ordained must come to England to receive orders, and there take the oath of allegiance. And so the matter stood until after the Revolution. Speaking of these two difficulties in later years John Adams declared that the speech of James Otis of Boston against the writs of assistance was the first step towards the Revolution;¹ and that ‘apprehensions of Episcopacy as much as any other cause roused the attention . . . and urged . . . to close thinking on the constitutional authority of Parliament over the Colonies.’²

We must now examine, as best we may, the title of England to tax the Colonies, for it was the enforcing of this right that brought the war to pass. The question can only be discussed properly, even then not certainly decided, by a learned constitutional lawyer. The Duke of Grafton said that in the beginning the right was so generally admitted that nobody questioned it, though it was afterwards abandoned.³ But he must have deceived himself strangely; it was denied at the outset by many. Mr. Lecky says that so far as Pennsylvania was concerned there could exist no doubt; according to the original charter, the Sovereign undertook to levy no tax except with the consent of the proprietor or chief governor or Assembly, ‘or by Act of Parliament in England.’ For the rest, the definite provision seems to have been overlooked

¹ Lecky, iv. 48.

² Trevelyan, iii. 299.

³ *Memoirs*, 127.

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or purposely ignored. As he says, 'the relation of the colonial legislatures to the Government at home was not very accurately defined.'¹ Sir Robert Walpole certainly had no faith in England's taxing power. He was urged to tax the Colonies at the time when he was being sorely harassed by the unpopularity of his own excise proposals in England :

'I have old England set against me by this measure,' he said, 'and do you think I will have new England too? I will not be the minister to enforce taxes at the expense of blood.'

Chatham did not claim it. In the debate on the Address in January 1766, he argued that Parliament was supreme in legislation; not in taxation.

'Let the sovereign authority of the country over the colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised and made to extend to every kind of legislation whatsoever,' said he, 'except that of taking money from their pockets without their own consent.'

And in 1774 he was still of opinion that this country 'had no right under heaven to tax the Americans.'

Shelburne agreed :

'I always have thought and always shall think,' he said in 1774, 'that both Ireland and America are subordinate to this country, but I shall likewise maintain my former opinion that they have rights, the free and unimpaired exercise of which should

¹ iv. 39.

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be preserved inviolate. The principal and fundamental right is that of granting their own money.'

And they were fortified by the high legal authority of Lord Camden. In the debates on the Declaratory Act of 1766 he had asserted that taxation by the British Parliament was 'contrary to the fundamental laws of the Constitution.'

Against this must be placed the opinion of Lord Mansfield.¹ Mansfield was a selfish politician and not a very brave one. A warm and secure corner for himself was the only object he strove for with fixed resolution. He was full of fight when America was talked about, but he never cared for responsibility when consequences came to be reckoned. Walpole, who hated him, said he was the real Prime Minister and the instigator of the war, and records with great satisfaction that on February 7th, 1775, Richmond and Shelburne brought this charge against him in the House of Lords, and threatened him with impeachment. He quotes as an instance of Mansfield's cautious spirit that he would not invest in the funds because he saw the mischief his policy was going to effect. And in illustration of his cold and selfish nature he recalls that when Chatham was struck down in the House of Lords, Mansfield, his old rival and opponent, was the only man who betrayed no symptom of distress. His habitual practice of

¹ He was Lord Chief Justice.

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evading an awkward situation was celebrated in a contemporary epigram :

‘ “ The Rubicon is passed,” great Julius cried ;
Mansfield, “ The Rubicon is pass’d,” replied :
Cæsar pressed on, came, saw, and won the day ;
—But what’s become of Mansfield ?—Run away.’

He had, at all events, nothing to recant. As far back as 1744, when he was Solicitor-General, his opinion was required, and he adopted one that had been given by a previous Law Officer, Sir Philip Yorke, in 1724, to the effect that a colony of English subjects could not be taxed except by a representative body of their own, *or by the British Parliament*. A quarter of a century had passed and he was impenitent. Much turned on the difference between internal and external taxation. The Americans had been disposed to submit to taxes imposed for customs purposes and the regulation of trade : what they objected to was an internal tax imposed for the raising of revenue. Mansfield would allow no difference ; he denounced the distinction as ‘ fantastic and untenable ’ ; for example, a port due levied on tobacco was in effect a tax imposed on the inland grower. To this argument Franklin, for one, objected that nobody need buy imports ; every one must pay taxes.

It was inevitable that much stress should be laid on the principle of no taxation without representation. Mansfield’s withers were unwrung. He argued that the Americans were as much

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represented in the House of Commons as the unenfranchised of England : every Member of Parliament represented, not only his own constituency, but the City of London, the Commons of the land, and the inhabitants of all the colonies and dominions of Great Britain.¹ This ingenious resource of proving that two blacks make a white was not employed by him alone. In the debates on North's penal measures in 1774 Lord Carmarthen justified the transfer of power from the elected council to the Governor by the argument that Manchester was in fact subject to laws in the making of which its inhabitants had no direct influence. And he was supported by another gentleman who protested that Parliament so truly represented the wisdom and the sentiment of the people that it might be said that every blade of grass in the country had its representative.

The constitutional principle had been laid down in its most rigid form by Lord Granville, who, just before his death, sent for Franklin, to whom he expounded his views :

‘ You Americans have wrong ideas of the nature of your constitution,’ said he ; ‘ you contend that the King's instructions to his Governors are not laws, and think yourselves at liberty to regard or disregard them at your own discretion. But those instructions are not like the pocket instructions given to a minister going abroad, for regulating his conduct in some trifling point of ceremony. They are first drawn up by judges learned in the laws ;

¹ Tilby, *op. cit.* 19.

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they are then considered, debated and perhaps amended in Council, after which they are signed by the King. They are then, so far as they relate to you, the law of the land, for the King is the Legislature of the Colonies.'

And in the absence of clear provision to the contrary this would assuredly include the power of imposing taxes. 'I told his lordship this was new doctrine to me,' was Franklin's dry comment.

A good example of the moderate and judicious mind may be found in Gibbon's confession :

'I took my seat at the beginning of the memorable contest between Great Britain and America, and supported, with many a sincere and silent vote, the rights, though not perhaps the interests, of the mother country.'

Rockingham and Burke when they opposed the Stamp Act admitted the abstract right of taxation.¹ The biographer of Alexander Hamilton sums up the situation thus :

'The balance of legal right was almost as plainly in favour of the British contentions as the balance of common sense was against them . . . a desperate struggle, the one side for its independence, the other for its dignity.'²

That the Americans were not without pretence of practising what they preached must be admitted when we read that during the war, Congress refrained from imposing taxes on the various

¹ *C. J. Fox*, by Lord John Russell, i. 49.

² By F. S. Oliver, chapter ii.

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States ; and inasmuch as the States were unwilling to tax themselves, there ensued a very complete financial collapse.¹ Apart from justice and principle, the Americans put forward another reason why they should not be asked to pay taxes. They had no money. They were suffering from the cost of their recent struggle with the Indians : they had old French war debts to dispose of. In 1765 a Mr. Sparhawk wrote to Lord Rockingham that their circulating cash was barely sufficient to carry on the trade of the country : it was impossible to spare any of this for payment of taxes—to which a political economist will perhaps be ready with a retort. During the war, specie almost entirely disappeared. In 1777 there were less than twelve million dollars in America.² Paper was at such a heavy discount that one traveller was presented with a hotel bill for 732*l.*, and fully satisfied his host with four and a half guineas sterling. This ill wind blew much good to debtors who had no scruples. The soldier of fortune who claimed and appropriated the titles of Earl of Stirling and Viscount Canada, relieved himself of debts to the amount of 80,000*l.* by handing over 1000*l.* in gold and silver.

So much for the conflict of principle out of which came the conflict of peoples. It is usual to consider the matter as though the thought of tampering with colonial budgets first entered into the mind of man in 1765. This is not so. The

¹ Lecky, iv. 393.

² *Ibid.* 394.

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freedom of American trade had in former days been sharply curtailed to suit the requirements of British markets. Mr. Tilby notes that in 1731 the Americans were forbidden to manufacture hats. At various times the export of wool and hardware was prohibited; but some compensating allowances were made, and there was no formidable opposition. We have seen that deliberate taxation was contemplated whilst Walpole was still minister. In 1754, when the American Colonies were threatened with attack by France, various schemes of defence were proposed. According to one of these the governors and councils were to draw upon the British Treasury for the expense, 'which was afterwards to be refunded by an Act of Parliament laying a tax on America': and we do not learn from Franklin¹ that any objection upon principle was uttered. A dozen years later the tone had changed. With the Stamp Act had been passed a Mutiny Act, which required the Americans to supply all soldiers in their garrisons with fire, candles, beds, vinegar, and salt. To this the firmest opposition was presented. If, so ran the argument, the British Parliament can oblige us to do a certain thing that costs us money, they are to that extent taxing us. New York refused to obey and could not be coerced. In 1770 a formal surrender was made; but this was on the eve of Lord North's conciliatory measures, and with these the offensive provisions were allowed

¹ *Autobiography*, 156.

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‘silently to expire’¹—to be revived by Act of Parliament for the benefit of General Gage in 1774.²

It will be observed that a very great principle was involved. England sent her troops to America and was prepared to undertake her defence. Was America to contribute nothing towards this? And if she objected to the further quartering of British troops on her continent, was she prepared to guarantee that there should be no loss of British dominion? People are apt to talk loosely of the wisdom of giving up the asserted right to tax in order to retain the allegiance of the colonies. But it must be borne in mind that this was not a minor consideration; it was the main principle upon which the sovereignty of England was said to depend. It was upon this that the question was debated. It was upon this that the issue was fought out.

Before the great collision, the Americans had been, upon the whole, submissive to interference from home. Their Post Office had been regulated for them; their currency and provisions for collection of debt were under supervision. The Navigation Act was not employed to their entire exclusion, nor to their obvious detriment; but they were subject to its provisions and had not shown resentment. Thus it came to pass that not a few Englishmen in office believed that America could and would be taxed. In 1763 Egremont,

¹ Lecky, iv. 133.

² *Ibid.* 168.

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Secretary of State, wrote to Shelburne at the Board of Trade :

‘In what way least burthensome and most palatable to the Colonies can they contribute towards the support of the additional expense which must attend the civil and military establishments upon the arrangements which your Lordship shall propose?’

Townshend, presiding over the Board of Trade under Bute, had drawn up a scheme of taxation; but it had been ill received and abandoned.¹ Bute nevertheless had every intention of making America pay taxes, and Grenville was of a like mind. He foreshadowed his momentous measure of 1765 by carrying this resolution in the House of Commons on March 10th, 1764 :

‘That towards further defraying the said expenses [defending protecting and securing the British Colonies and plantations in America] it may be proper to charge certain stamp duties on the said colonies and plantations’ :²

and three days later he further committed himself to the principle that America must contribute towards the cost of her military establishments :

‘1. That an additional duty of 1.£ 2s sterling money, per hundred weight avoirdupois, be laid upon all white or clayed sugars, of the produce or manufacture of any foreign American Colony or plantation imported into any British Colony or plantation in America.

‘2. That the produce of the said additional duty be paid into the receipt of his majesty’s

¹ *Shelburne, Fitzmaurice*, i. 186.

² *Annual Register*.

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exchequer, and there reserved to be from time to time disposed of by parliament, towards defraying the necessary expenses of defending protecting and securing the British Colonies and plantations in America.¹

This, therefore, was the position when Grenville passed the Stamp Act in 1765 ; the constitutional rights of the contending parties had been loosely drawn and gave to each a plausible case for argument. The British Parliament considered itself justified in laying on taxes ; but it was not without suspicion of resistance. The Americans had hitherto not organised any formidable opposition to interference from England ; but there was latent a determination to oppose what they deemed to be a violation of their liberties.

Reviewing the story with the wisdom that comes after the event, one is confronted with the obvious fact that independence sooner or later was inevitable ; but it is to be remembered that the men of that generation had no such evidence to guide them. It is true that there were prophets here and there. As far back as 1698 the Inspector-General of Exports and Imports had written :

‘ We may let them [the New England Colonies] grow in naval strength and power which, if suffered, we cannot expect to hold them long in our subjection. . . . An immense profit . . . will either decline or come to a strength that may be used against us.’²

¹ *Annual Register*.

² Tilby, *op. cit.* 6.

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Sir George Savile, most sensible and excellent of Whigs, wrote to Lord Rockingham in 1768 :

‘ For in my opinion (which may be in this case a little singular) it is in the nature of things that, some time or other, colonies so situated, must assume to themselves the right of nature, and resist those of law, which is rebellion. By rights of nature, I mean advantage of situation or their natural powers. I am sorry to have confounded right and power so much.’

And five years later he wrote of the future of America when it should begin ‘ to entice our rich as it does now our people.’ He for one had no illusions about the upshot of the war. Early in 1775 he told Ministers in Parliament that he saw they were bent on war, but he could assure them they would be beaten. And yet so ardent a patriot as Franklin could find it in his heart to admit that inasmuch as the colonies were incapable of combining to withstand the Indians, it was beyond belief that they could ever be united in opposition to England.¹

It may be believed that up to the very hour when shots were fired at Concord, the greater part and the better part of the American community had not seriously contemplated and did not, indeed, desire complete separation from the British Crown. This does not mean that the conception did not exist : it undoubtedly had many advocates. In March 1766 Lord Hardwicke wrote to Yorke, his brother :

¹ Tilby, *op. cit.* 11.

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‘ Have you seen the New York Gazette extraordinary? Lord Mansfield says it is Justice Livingstone’s. It is very strong for independency.’

George III. believed that independence had been a living faith long before the war. In 1774 he wrote to North :

‘ Indeed all men seem now to feel that the fatal compliance of 1766 has encouraged the Americans annually to encrease in their pretensions to that thorough independency which one state has of another, but which is quite subversive of the obedience which a colony owes to its mother country.’

North himself had said in the House of Commons on January 9th, 1770, ‘ The contest now is for no less than sovereignty on the one side and independence on the other.’ But the movement in the early years lacked authority, if not earnestness. Its advocates may perhaps be likened to the ardent apostles of Protection in this country who cried in the wilderness so piteously and so long until, after the making of one momentous speech, they found that their leaders and colleagues were ready enough, under due provocation, to come over and help them.

For a long time, however, the voice of America continued to be heard in support of loyalty and alliance. To illustrate this we may quote the opinions of the two men who were in the end mainly responsible for the independence that came to pass. A little time before the outbreak of war, Franklin assured Lord Chatham that having more than once travelled from one end of

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the continent to the other, he had never heard 'from any person drunk or sober the least expression of a wish for separation or a hint that such a thing would be advantageous to America.' Upon this it is only fair to make two comments : Quincy, who was intimate with Franklin, wrote from London to the Sons of Liberty in Boston on December 27th, 1774 :

'Dr. Franklin is an American in heart and soul : you may trust him : his ideas are not contracted within the narrow limits of exemption from taxes, but are extended upon the broad scale of total emancipation. He is explicit and bold upon the subject.'¹

Further, it has been pointed out that Franklin had been in England for several years, and could not know how opinion in America was moving. More than this : even Sir George Trevelyan admits that Franklin 'occasionally practised duplicity.' Wedderburn called him 'the wily New Englander . . . a hoary-headed traitor.' He may have been deceiving Chatham—or Quincy : but the probability is that, at all events until his trial before the Privy Council, he was bound to England by ties of sympathy and affection. As far back as 1726 he had gravely considered the proposition of settling down in this country as a teacher of swimming.² No sooner had war begun, however, than his spirit revolted within him and his antagonism was henceforth uncompromising.

¹ Stanhope, vii. 251.

² *Autobiography*, 61.

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‘ Mr. Strachan,’ he wrote to an old friend, ‘ you are a member of Parliament and one of that majority which has doomed my country to destruction. You have begun to burn our towns, and murder our people. Look upon your hands. They are stained by the blood of your relations. You and I were long friends. You are now my enemy and I am Yours
B. FRANKLIN.

There is no disguise of bitterness here ; he was certainly not ‘ practising duplicity ’ ; yet Sir George Trevelyan makes the surprising comment that this implied ‘ a forgiveness which he conveyed in a letter of grim and, for him, rather heavy-handed raillery ’ ; adding, with great truth, that ‘ there was some excuse for a French editor who took the letter in sad earnest.’

Hear now George Washington. In 1774 he wrote to an officer in the British Army :

‘ Although you are taught to believe that the people of Massachusetts are rebellious, setting up for independency and what not, give me leave, my good friend, to tell you that you are abused, grossly abused.’¹

Washington has earned the reputation, on inadequate grounds indeed, of never having told a lie ; we may therefore assume that this letter was written in good faith. So soon did his views undergo a change that within two years he was writing in orders to his men :

‘ You are fighting for the blessing of liberty ; slavery will be your portion and that of your

¹ *Fox*, Lord J. Russell, i. 68.

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posterity if you do not acquit yourselves like men ;'¹

and to Congress after two years more,

‘ Nothing short of independence it appears to me can possibly do. A peace on any other terms would, if I may be allowed the expression, be a peace of war.’²

In 1769 the House of Burgesses of Virginia, in forwarding a protest against taxation, solemnly declared their inviolable attachment to his Majesty’s sacred person and benevolent Government. Seven years later they melted down their statue of his sacred Majesty and made of it 42,000 bullets for use against his troops. In 1774 the Address from Congress to the people of Great Britain set forth that

‘ you are told that we are seditious, impatient of government, desirous of independence. Be assured that these are not facts but calumnies.’

When opinion began to turn there were moments of embarrassment. In 1775 the Congress of New York were warned that both Washington and Governor Tryon were about to arrive. The officer commanding the Militia received orders so to dispose his troops as to receive whichever came first and ‘ to wait on both as well as circumstances would admit.’ Perhaps no better indication of the movement of thought can be found than Jefferson affords. On November 29th, 1775, he had written :

¹ Trevelyan, ii. 271.

² Fox, Russell, i. 163.

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‘There is not in the British Empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But, by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connexion on such terms as the British Parliament proposes, and in this I speak the sentiments of America.’

His pen it was that drafted the Declaration of Independence seven months later,¹ and little vestige do we find there of any love of union, cordial or otherwise. The language of this document is so deliberately violent and so shrilly high-pitched that it can be described as nothing but frantic. These are some of its sentences :

‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . . The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. . . . (Three long paragraphs of grievances). . . . He has kept amongst us in times of peace, Standing Armies without the consent of our legislators. . . . He has given his Assent to Acts . . . for imposing Taxes on us without our consent. . . . He has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages. . . . We have petitioned for redress in most humble terms : our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant is unfit to be ruler of a free people.’

It should be hardly necessary to recall the fact that there were very many who remained loyal to

¹ Trevelyan, ii. 157.

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the end, to their own grievous loss and hindrance ; many who were literally faithful unto death ; but it will be well to point out that amongst the professing patriots there were large numbers whose aspirations were neither patriotic nor pure. ‘Independence?’ exclaimed one supporter of the revolution : ‘we mean a form of government to make us independent of the rich and every man able to do as he pleases.’¹ And the ardent soul of John Adams was once dashed when a notorious gaol-bird thanked him for having helped towards the consummation, because in the tumult all Courts of Justice had been closed.² Adams himself confessed at the end of the war that it was his belief that more than a third of the principal people of America had throughout been opposed to the revolution.³

This leads us to the mortifying reflection that the British Parliament and the British Army were not thwarted and defeated by a devoted nation of heroes in arms. Nobody admits more readily than Sir George Trevelyan that the Americans had little stomach for campaigning, and none at all for discipline. Throughout the war they came and went as seemed good to them. They were not afraid of fighting ; but they were not going to allow any call to arms to come between them and their domestic affairs. There was indeed a remnant, such as the noble band who endured all things at Valley Forge : but the principle, or

¹ Stanhope, vi. 140.

² Lecky, iv. 223.

³ *Ibid.* 222.

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perhaps the jargon of liberty, was abroad, and obedience was no part of the common philosophy. Washington, deserted by a large portion of his troops, was compelled to keep order amongst those that remained by unsparing use of the lash.¹ And poor enough was the material for war that remained. The men insisted on electing their own officers. Even had they been ready then to follow them like soldiers, they could give poor guarantee of victory. So ill equipped were they that Lee and Franklin urged Washington to arm them with bows and arrows in default of better weapons.² At one time British prisoners were prevented from setting eyes upon the troops to whom they were captive, so much ashamed of their abject plight were the American commanders.

General du Portail, who has already been quoted, wrote from the seat of war to St. Germain in Paris at the end of 1777 in unflattering language. According to him it was in the American nature to be

‘oisif, passer la plus grande partie de la journée à fumer et à boire du thé ou des liqueurs fortes . . . aussi n’aime-t-il point du tout la guerre.’

If the American force were doubled, it would not double their power, but treble their embarrassments. There was more enthusiasm in Paris cafés than in the United Colonies, said he. Americans hated the French, but it would be worth the while of France to join in the struggle : if Eng-

¹ Trevelyan, i. 327.

² *Ibid.* 353.

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land lost America it would be her ruin.¹ There was, indeed, some of the austere and inspiring principle of the Ironsides in the rebel host. We read of officers and men, who absented themselves from divine service, or were guilty of 'profane cursing and swearing,' being fined for the benefit of the sick and poor amongst their comrades. Washington was a pious man, who believed in turning to his Maker for succour in adversity: but he could never refresh his spirits with the contemplation of an ordered and steadfast army such as followed Cromwell into battle. Again and again he had to lament the evil conduct and condition of his troops. In the fighting at New York we are told that he was so desperate at the 'infamous conduct of the troops that he sought death rather than life.'² In 1778 he wrote to Banister that 'there are symptoms which may authorise an opinion that the people of America are pretty generally weary of the present war.'

In the Auckland MSS. at the British Museum there is a communication undated and unsigned, which Eden sent to North in 1779. The writer, in America, says:

'Our affairs are as dark as they can be, and really I think the game is up. . . . The continental money is not worth a curse. Those red hot Virginians who were so violent are all crying for peace. I don't wonder at it, for, by God, that Province at least will be starved.'³

¹ Stanhope, Ap. xxxvii.

² *Ibid.* vi. 173.

³ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34415.

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One of Washington's Brigadiers was writing privately,

'I passed the usual compliments to the troops under my command. I did not tell the world that near half my countrymen left me.'

All this Washington saw and knew, and at times his gallant soul broke forth in a wail of despair. After the battle of Haarlem in 1776 he wrote that he hoped he was safe,

'if the generality of our troops should behave with tolerable bravery. But experience to my extreme affliction has convinced me that this is rather to be wished for than expected. . . . Our affairs are in a more distressed, ruinous, and deplorable condition than they have been since the commencement of the war.'

That was his reflection after three years of hard fighting and unceasing endeavour: and two years later he reported to Congress: 'To me it will appear miraculous if our affairs can maintain themselves much longer in their present strain.'

And worse than this, he was not even upheld by loyal and whole-hearted colleagues. 'Party disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day'; so he wrote of Congress to Benjamin Harrison at the end of 1778. He had to reckon with generals, disobedient like Charles Lee, or jealous and designing, such as Gates. There was the insidious and treacherous attempt to ruin him that is known as the Conway Cabal: Silas Deane in Paris was intriguing to

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get him superseded in favour of the Comte de Broglie.¹

And it was an enemy, composed of such ragged material, led by such quarrelsome officers, and commanded by a general so grievously beset, that proved itself a match and more than a match for the might of the British army and the resources of her stoutest generals ; until in the end Grenville, Fox's envoy in Paris, could say to Franklin :

‘ Our enemies may now do what they please with us : they have the ball at their feet and we hope they will show their moderation and their magnanimity.’

To say this is not to ignore the intervention of France. When the French became the allies of America, the situation was immediately transformed. England had no longer free access to the shores of America : her security was gone : her attention and her energies were diverted into new channels. The King saw this at once, though he would be the last man to acknowledge it willingly. It must have cost him much to admit that henceforth we must modify our land campaign and be content with holding the coast line and Canada.² In June of the previous year he had given it as his opinion that the Americans would treat before winter. Now they had a new lease of life. All this is quite true ; but it does not alter the fact that if the French Government had preserved a

¹ Trevelyan, iv. 46.

² Letters of January 13th and February 9th, 1778.

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nominal neutrality, it may still be believed that we should never have conquered the Americans. They owed much to France: money and arms. From first to last it is said they received twenty-six millions of francs. Powder and guns came in the nick of time. But all this might have happened without overt action by Government. They had advanced money secretly. They connived at the enterprise of French officers. When a warning came to them that Lafayette was on the point of starting, they issued an order for his arrest, giving him plenty of time to slip away.

No less illustrious a person than Beaumarchais transformed himself into an imaginary firm of Spanish merchants, by name Roderigo Hortalez & Co., who suddenly developed a large export trade from Havre and Nantes. The Customs officers received a hint that they need not be too inquisitive; and the mythical Spaniards shipped off large quantities of arms, which they had been permitted to buy secretly and on advantageous terms from the Government arsenals. There sprung up in France the sentimental devotion to the Revolution, professed by the Queen herself, which was to be mocked with such frightful practical experience in due season. Individuals were ready to make sacrifices for the sacred cause. Lafayette himself spent his entire income and 70,000*l.* of capital on his troops in the Carolinas in 1778.¹

¹ Lecky, v. 111.

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France would and could and did help America in the land fight. It is conceivable that her resistance must otherwise have broken down: but it would be a gross exaggeration to say that she carried on the war relying solely on French support. There was never much sympathy between the two nations. Lafayette was always an object of jealousy. The Americans in their fine frenzy of emancipation were not likely to affect subservience to their traditional enemy. The French in Canada, whom they counted on as additional allies, would have nothing to do with them. Even in the principal matter of naval strategy the coalition was defective. D'Estaing stirred up bitterness and strife by failing them at a critical moment; and eventually he sailed away with his army regardless of his obligations.

It may be argued that it would have been better for both parties if the alliance had continued to be informal and illicit. There was plenty of zeal and assistance to be relied on amongst individuals. Lord Glenbervie in his *Journal* quotes Mr. Quintin Crawford as a reliable authority. By him he was assured that Lafayette offered Maurepas his services as a spy in London, and was in fact intent on spying when society thought he was absorbed in quadrilles. Ambition and intrigue were his ruling passions, and he was 'a stranger to those feelings and principles which bind men to each other by sentiment as well as affection.' According to Mr. Crawford, again, Maurepas, for one,

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was no advocate of a change from amateur assistance to Government intervention :

‘ Found in Mr. Crawford’s Memoire that Mr. de Maurepas, who had been persuaded by Vergennes openly to take part with the Americans, upon coming out of the Council where that measure had been decisively resolved upon, said to one of his friends : “ Les Anglois ont fait une sottise en se querellant avec les Americains, et nous une toute aussi grande en nous mêlant dans leurs disputes.” ’¹

The French alliance, then, did affect the prospects of England, and obviously diminished her chances of ultimate success : but we cannot get away from the fact that, even with the sea open and secure, Saratogas and Yorktowns might still have been our portion until King George would have been left without a man to go on with him in his forlorn endeavour. And, as Lord John Russell says :

‘ Even if three millions of Americans had been subdued, they would soon have become six, and America would have armed and fought again not to be subdued.’²

It has been said that the American question was made more difficult of solution by reason of a confusion of ideas. Men were content with platitudes and phrases : there was no pursuit of reason : and in the welter of cross purposes nobody was more misleading and obscure than Chatham. His name was revered on the continent of America.

¹ *Glenbervie Journals*, 38.

² *Fox*, i. 137.

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An American mezzotint—said to be the first of their producing—represents Chatham arrayed as a Roman, upstanding as the champion and embodiment of liberty. Now, let it be borne in mind that the issue which had to be faced, and which it was impossible to avoid or ignore, was this: was America to have independence or was she not? First we have Chatham as the high priest of liberty speaking thus:

‘I trust that it will be impossible for free men in England to wish to see three millions of slaves in America.’

When he spoke of the employment of German troops he cried:

‘If I were an American as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms, never, never, never.’

And when he declaimed against the enlistment of Indians—although he had without doubt been privy to their services during his own wars¹—so fiery was his indignation, that the Duke of Grafton declared that it ‘surpassed all that was ever heard of the celebrated orators of Greece and Rome.’ He was the friend of the oppressed American struggling to be free; and so easy was it for him to illuminate his sentiment with the flame of eloquence that one need not be surprised to find Sir William Hamilton writing from Naples to Lord Dartmouth:

¹ Stanhope, vi. 311.

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‘I can never forgive Lord Chatham for the factious part he has taken at this moment : if there should be bloodshed (which God forbid) it will in my opinion be greatly owing to his Lordship’s indiscretion—to call it by no worse a name.’¹

But one looks again and one wonders whether his American admirers were acquainted with his views upon the independence which had now become the single end and purpose of their existence. We have seen that he denied the right to tax America ; but even here he was apt to be obscure :

‘If the gentleman does not understand the difference between external and internal taxes I cannot help it,’ he said in 1766 : ‘but there is a plain distinction between taxes levied for the purpose of raising revenue and duties imposed for the regulation of trade for the accommodation of the subject ; although in the consequences some revenue must incidentally arise from the latter’ ;

which undoubtedly left where they were the seeds of dissatisfaction and dispute. Rockingham told Burke in 1775 that Chatham had said to him that the Declaratory Bill had been the cause of all the mischief now descending on them : but never for a moment did he contemplate giving up to the Americans the one and only thing which would have contented them. In 1770 he spoke of them affectionately in the House of Lords, but he added :

‘They are children ; they must obey and we pre-

¹ Patshull House Papers (unpublished).

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scribe . . . there must be something more than connexion ; there must be obedience, there must be dependence.'

In 1774 he said :

'If their turbulence exist after your professed terms of forgiveness . . . I will be amongst the foremost of your Lordships to move for such measures as will effectually prevent a future relapse and make them feel what it is to provoke a fond and forgiving parent.'

In the debates of 1776-7 he urged the repeal of all the Acts to which the Americans had objected, yet ever with the condition that independence be not conceded. It was at this period that Lord Suffolk attributed Chatham's opposition to the motion for the Christmas adjournment to the fact that 'he was sure he would be allowed to give his advice nowhere else.' Certainly it would have carried little weight now across the Atlantic. In 1777 Chatham was again protesting that the Americans, contending for their rights, he loved and admired ; but 'contending for independence and total disconnexion from England, I cannot wish them success.' In the same year Shelburne wrote to assure him of his support in his resistance 'in (I am sorry to say it) the desperate state of this country.' Finally, in that famous speech which ended his career in Parliament and, one may say, with his dying breath, Chatham cried aloud, 'My lords, his Majesty succeeded to an Empire as great in extent as its reputation was unsullied. Shall we tarnish the lustre of that Empire by an ignominious

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surrender of our rights.' It is not seldom asserted that if Chatham had been allowed to govern instead of Lord North, he would certainly have composed the quarrel with America. If these were his views on the subject of independence, then to say this is to offer a sentimental misreading of history.

II

We have now taken a general view of the conditions under which England and her American Colonies were rent asunder. It remains to trace the story step by step. This has been done so often, so recently, and with such amplitude of detail, that no attempt at a military history will be made here. The outline shall be drawn, as it were, for the guidance of a beginner ; with such observations as may seem to be appropriate.

To recapitulate :—In March 1765 Grenville, pursuing the policy he had foreshadowed in the previous year, passed the Stamp Act. Every document embodying a transaction according to law was henceforth to be taxed. The reasons assigned for taxing the Colonies were not improper. They had been a heavy charge to England already. They required a system of defence for the future. They contributed nothing in the form of direct tribute ; they even evaded their obligations to the Customs Revenue. Smuggling was universal and undisguised. Sir George

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Trevelyan speaks of 'leading merchants who were likewise eminently respectable smugglers on an enormous scale.' Some of the Customs officers made their places sinecures, and stayed away. Those who ostensibly performed their duties would drink in the captain's cabin whilst the ship's cargo was being swiftly conveyed ashore. One honest man who attempted to pry into the hold of a vessel, was seized and locked up until the contents were safely stored in the merchants' warehouses. Tea was only allowed to be imported from England; yet out of a million and a half of pounds consumed, no more than one-tenth was known to be of British origin. France, Denmark, Sweden, and Holland all took part cheerfully in the contraband trade. Some time later a Custom-house officer reckoned that Indian goods of all kinds that found their way into American markets without paying toll represented half a million of money every year.

Grenville set about reforming all this. He determined to enforce the Customs regulations, conceding at the same time certain relaxations and advantages. The Americans were indignant, but admitted that he was not going beyond the proper limits of authority. The Stamp Act was another matter; against the principle of this, they arose in wrath. It was not that the amount was excessive. It was estimated that the upkeep of the garrisons required for protection of the Colonies would cost 350,000*l.*, and that the Stamp duties would bring

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to the Exchequer no more than 100,000/.¹ The Act was passed in March 1765; it was not to take effect until November. Grenville was prepared to pursue an alternative course if the Americans could show him one that was as good and that they liked better.² The Americans did not respond. They took the period of grace as an opportunity given for resistance; and this they set about with a will. When they saw that preparation was made, they drove the Stamp officials from their midst, and consigned all the stamps and stamped paper to the flames. Representatives from nine provinces met in congress at New York. The Governor remonstrated, and declared their action to be unconstitutional, unprecedented, and unlawful. Fearless of his thunder, they passed certain resolutions, moderate in tone and loyal in spirit, but uncompromising in protest. At Boston there were riots: the houses of the Lieutenant-Governor, Hutchinson, and of Oliver, Secretary of the Province, were sacked and burnt. Heroic resolutions were adopted. No lamb was to be eaten, so that citizens might clothe themselves in home-grown woollen garments instead of imported British cloth. Nothing was to be purchased of the mother country: so would they be revenged. But, as a matter of fact, the self-denying ordinance was not rigidly observed; and, with a lead from New York, patriots began to connive at its violation.³

¹ *Political History of England*, x. 59.

² Stanhope, v. 125.

³ Stanhope, v. 397; Trevelyan, i. 94.

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The Stamp Act was manifestly doomed to failure. Its author went out of office in July 1765. Rockingham succeeded him, and in February 1766 it was repealed. The hated incubus was thus removed; but the sore place was not to be perfectly cured. To save the face of King and Parliament, resolutions were passed declaring the undoubted right of England to tax her Colonies, should she be so minded. Content with their actual victory, the Americans were disposed to ignore the formal reservation. In July, Rockingham resigned, and Chatham's Government, in Grafton's name, was formed. Chatham speedily fell sick and disappeared. Then the volatile Townshend, casting about for revenue, to make good his loss on the land tax, that had been reduced by a vote of Opposition, bethought him of the Colonies and the Declaratory Act. In June 1767 he passed three bills of which one imposed duties on certain articles imported into America from England: glass, lead, paper, were amongst them; and there was to be a charge of 3*d.* a pound on tea. These duties might have been represented as coming under the head of external taxes: but there was no pretence. The entire produce was not expected to exceed 40,000*l.*,¹ but it was to be regarded as revenue paid to the King and to be expended exclusively on the needs of America.

Then ensued a period of confusion and discord. Townshend died and North became Chancellor of

¹ Lecky, iv. 110.

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the Exchequer. In May 1769 Grafton proposed to repeal all the taxes. It was decided in Cabinet Council, by a majority of one, to retain the tax on tea. Sir George Trevelyan says that the casting vote lay with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that he voted for retention out of deference to the King and against his own view of his own duty.¹ The same assertion is made by the author of the *Political History of England*.² Years afterwards (November 20th, 1775) in the House of Commons North repudiated all responsibility for the taxes that had been imposed upon America. He found them in existence, he said, when he took office—by which he presumably meant Cabinet office. Then, whilst he strove for peace, and was prepared for compromise, he was compelled to maintain the principle that had been asserted. He certainly voted for the retention of the tea duty now ; but it can hardly be said that his was the casting vote. Lord Stanhope, on the contrary, says :

‘On a division the proposal of Lord Grafton was rejected by the casting vote of one, and that one Lord Rochford, whom the Duke himself had so lately nominated as his colleague.’³

Grafton, Camden, Conway, and Granby were out-voted by North, Gower, Weymouth, Hillsborough, and Rochford : but one cannot say that any of the five had a sole and singular responsibility for the result. Collectively they were responsible for much.

¹ i. 94.

² Vol. x. 90.

³ v. 365.

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The next event of importance took place in March of the following year, 1770, at the moment when North was carrying into effect the Cabinet resolutions. The presence of a British garrison was a constant source of offence to the people of Boston, who indulged in a great deal of abuse, and occasional demonstrations in force. An aggravated case of hustling provoked a volley, and American blood was shed by English soldiers. Half-a-dozen lives were forfeited and the 'Boston Massacre' was added to the sacred list upon the national calendar. The soldiers and their officer, Captain Preston, were to be tried for their lives; and it must always be remembered, as an honourable record, that, in the face of furious public prejudice, two American stalwarts, Quincy and John Adams, were found to defend the accused men, and that the Court acquitted all but two, who were moderately punished for manslaughter.

It may be noted in passing that it was the ribald youth of Boston that conferred on the red-coated soldier the nickname of lobster, that has only of late years become unfamiliar. And in this connection it may be added that one of the grievances alleged against the presence of troops was that their pronunciation corrupted the purity of American speech. Possibly they included in their objection the application to themselves of the designation Yankee, which is said to have been the Indians' corruption of the word *Anglais*. Other words known to us may be here accounted

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for: Tammany enshrines the memory of Tammanend, a sagacious chief, who had land transactions with Penn in 1684. Caucus, we are told, was the name given to the Boston Committee in the throes of the tea struggle. Its definition is 'a private meeting to carry out schemes,' but its origin is obscure. In 1776 Benedict Arnold spoke of 'bosses' building his fleet at Crown Point.

Meanwhile no good was being done. North had estimated a revenue of 11,000*l.* or 12,000*l.* a year¹ from the tea duty. So insignificant were the returns that Beckford was prepared to assure the House of Commons that in 1769 the receipts in the Southern part of the Continent had amounted to 295*l.* 14*s.*; and in the Northern regions to nothing at all. The Americans had not, and did not claim to have, a grievance on the score of high prices. Their tax was threepence per pound. They were relieved of the shilling duty payable on all teas passing through English ports, which fell chiefly, if not wholly, on American buyers.² Their tea was cheaper than before; not dearer. Franklin was ready to admit that there was no burden to complain of; it was the principle that was resented. He further admitted that at the time when Americans were professedly refusing to drink any English tea, and were not supposed to import any other, at least half a million of them drank tea twice a day.³

After the Boston massacre and until 1773 there

¹ Stanhope, v. 400.

² Lecky, iv. 162.

³ Stanhope, v. 400.

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was no widespread breach of the peace, and no memorable change of policy. Then the lull in the storm was broken by a great disturbance. The East India Company were in an evil plight. To give them some comfort and assistance, the Government issued orders allowing them to send their tea direct to America.¹ Already a drawback on the English Customs duties had been granted on teas intended for America. The Americans were to have abundance of cheap tea ; but they preferred to have a grievance. Stories were circulated of cargoes of poisoned tea, intended to exterminate all patriots ; and of ships whose tea-chests were filled with fetters, designed for their bondage. On a December night a band of resisters, disguised as Indians, raided some ships in Boston Harbour and threw their cargoes into the water.

And enmity was being fostered by proceedings in London. Benjamin Franklin, whatever we may think of him, was certainly one of the world's characters. He had taken his career in hand most bravely as a boy ; he had worked as a printer ; had made his way by industry and intelligence ; and he had prospered. He had been much in England, and had dear friends there. He was of a creative intellect and invented the lightning conductor. He was a bold theorist with the courage of his convictions. Having once written a treatise on the causes and cure of cold and rheums, he died a victim to consistency : 'having caught the violent

¹ Lecky, iv. 153.

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cold which finally choked him by sitting for some hours at a window with the cold air blowing in upon him.’¹ At the time of which we write he was Agent in London for several States, including Massachusetts. He was also Joint Postmaster-General of America. In 1773 Hutchinson and Oliver had written some letters about the state of American feeling to Whately, a politician who had held subordinate appointments. These men were now Governor and Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, but the letters were essentially private and unofficial. Whately died, and the letters came into Franklin’s hands. They were not intended for his reading, and he knew that a sinister interpretation would be put upon his possession of them. He did not at once acknowledge his discovery and make formal complaint; he sent his information privately to his clients in America, under secret seal. The letters very quickly found their way into print, and the outcry was prodigious. Much has been written about Franklin’s conduct. His apologists, including Sir George Trevelyan, hold that he did no more than his duty in warning his fellow-countrymen of the reports that were being furnished for the instigation of Government. This may be so; but there is an unpleasant flavour about the transaction: it tastes rather of the spy than the diplomatic agent; and if Franklin acted honourably, he certainly was not eager to claim credit for what he had done.

¹ Trevelyan, ii. 263, note.

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Moreover, if he were sincere in his efforts to keep the peace between the two countries, he committed a grave diplomatic blunder.

The people of Massachusetts petitioned for the removal of Hutchinson and Oliver. The case was brought before the Privy Council in January 1774, and Wedderburn made a speech which has never been forgotten. Wedderburn was a political adventurer of the most dashing and shameless type. He had begun as a follower of Bute. He then adhered to Grenville. In 1769 he had become an active member of Opposition, and was called upon to resign his seat by his patron, who was a Government man. He was acclaimed as a martyr, and was entertained at a dinner, where he made a fine bragging speech. But in 1771 he suddenly appeared as North's Solicitor-General. 'This must be confessed to be one of the most flagrant cases of ratting recorded in our party annals,' is the comment of Campbell in his *Lives of the Chancellors*. The excuse Wedderburn gave was that since Grenville's death he was bound by no ties of allegiance to any man or party. He seems to have felt that his services were never adequately appreciated or rewarded; for we find a message from Lord North in 1777 begging him to dismiss from his mind any suspicion of the kind.¹ He bid for the King's favour by advising him that he was entitled to use troops in the Gordon Riots; he became Lord Loughborough, Lord Chancellor,

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

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and Earl of Rosslyn, and ended his days as the life and soul of the Fox Opposition to Pitt's Government in the House of Lords.¹ Nobody trusted him. The King once wrote :

‘ I do not understand the reason of Mr. Solicitor-General chusing to speak, unless he thinks upon that question being consistent is a veil over that duplicity that often appears in his political deportment.’

Junius dismissed him with the stinging sentence, ‘ As for Mr. Wedderburn, there is something about him that even treachery cannot trust.’ He was flagrantly selfish and boldly insincere. At the last he fell out of notice, and was aggrieved at the disdain of the Court, whose attention he desired. ‘ He has not left a worse man behind him,’ said his uncompromising Sovereign when he heard that he was dead. Yet he was not without his admirers. Thus Windham wrote of him to Mrs. Crewe :

‘ Whatever faults might belong to him, [he] was a friendly, kindly-disposed man, and one whom I liked to associate with. He had an enjoyment of life that imparted enjoyment to others, as well as a variety of knowledge and experience that made his conversation interesting and instructive.’²

Such was the man who now saw a rare chance of playing to the gallery. His attack on Franklin was terrific : he insulted him as much as circumstances permitted, and ended by calling him a thief.

¹ Brougham, i. 97.

² *Windham Papers*, ii. 252.

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His audience shouted with delight: all except North, who scented mischief from afar. The petition against the Governors was dismissed, and Franklin was deprived of his Postmastership. This day's doings he treasured in his heart and devoted to revenge. He likewise preserved with care the clothes he wore. The legend is that he put them on next when he signed the peace at Paris that ended England's sovereignty in America. It appears that this piece of indifferent melodrama was enacted at the signing of the treaty of alliance with France in 1778.¹

Franklin did not at once leave England. In 1775 he was still conferring with Chatham upon the terms of a possible measure of conciliation; but it is difficult to believe that he was in earnest. He was now too far gone in sympathy with America and in anger against this country to be a messenger of peace. It is even conceivable that he found difficulty in preserving his gravity during his conferences with Chatham. Those who were permitted to visit the recluse at Hayes found him, so Walpole says,

‘sitting up in bed with a satin eiderdown quilt on his feet. He wore a duffil cloak, without arms, bordered with broad purple lace. On his head he had a nightcap, and over that a hat with a rim flapped all round.’

The measure drafted in these strange surroundings was presented by Chatham on February 1st,

¹ Trevelyan, ii. Appendix.

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and its abrupt rejection was followed a month later by Franklin's departure to America, where he was to earn his place amongst the men to whose ability and zeal the winning of independence must be ascribed. His son, be it noted, remained a leader of the loyalists before, during, and after the war.

The year 1774 was to be no time of ease for Lord North. Already, says Mr. Lecky, 'England was plainly staggering under the weight of her Empire . . . and there were loud cries for reduction.' And North had all his troubles before him. He began by prescribing a punishment for Massachusetts. The port of Boston was to be closed, and Government officials moved to Salem. Gibbon wrote to Holroyd that this would be 'so detrimental to the former town, as must soon reduce it your terms.' The powers of the Council were transferred to the Crown. Any Government official or soldier, under accusation, might be sent for trial to another Colony, or even to England. Provisions for the quartering of troops were laid down.

Gibbon was wrong. Boston had no thought of giving in. The suppressed Assembly met in June at Salem to consider the propriety of summoning a congress of all the Colonies. The Governor's Secretary shouted at them through the keyhole that they were an illegal and unconstitutional body. This deterred them not at all. The Governor nominated a new Council and fixed the date of meeting. It was all in vain : men either would not

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or dared not serve, and the writs of summons were cancelled. The unofficial assembly met instead, and voted a Committee of Safety. The King's writ had ceased to run in Massachusetts.

And the seed sown here sprung up in the night and flowered abundantly. In September 1774 the American Congress met at Philadelphia. Delegates, elected haphazard, came from twelve States: Georgia, the thirteenth, joined next year. They passed resolutions insisting on all the privileges and exemptions they had already claimed and asserted, and adjourned until the following May.

There was one element of comfort for the home Government. The passing of the Quebec Act had worked for peace and goodwill. Canada took no part in these proceedings and remained loyal to England. There were exceptions, to be sure: a British officer wrote home in November 1775:

‘General Carleton has been much deceived by the Canadians, as his sole dependence was in them should an invasion take place, but they in general took up arms against us (except the Noblesse and Seigniors)—the reason of it I do not know, except that they were too well treated. 500 men were entrenched before Chamblée when it surrendered.’

This was written by a man desponding in captivity: the fact remains that Canada did not throw in her lot with the revolting States, and that when they appealed to her and invaded her, their advances were in both cases repulsed.

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In February 1775 Chatham brought in his Bill for restoring harmony. The right of taxation was to be disallowed. Congress was to be recognised and invited to contribute towards Imperial expenditure. The supremacy of the British Parliament was to be formally admitted. All offensive Acts of Parliament were to be repealed. Dartmouth in the House of Lords showed that he was willing enough to take this as a possible basis of settlement ; but he perceived that his colleagues were united against him, and the Bill was thrown out forthwith.

North meanwhile was blowing hot and cold. He told the House of Commons that taxation in England stood at twenty-five shillings per capita : in America it was only sixpence.¹ He then passed some measures for the punishment and to the detriment of America ; and to the surprise and indignation of his party, followed this up by proposing on February 26th, 1775, another one of a forgiving and yielding nature : if the Colonies would promise a voluntary contribution, then the right of taxation should be formally surrendered. But it was too late. The Americans found in this the lurking sting of exaction. Parliament, after a formidable show of disapproval, passed it ; but the faithful found consolation in voting steadily against the resolutions with which Burke was striving at the eleventh hour to renew the frustrated efforts of Chatham.

¹ *Parliamentary History.*

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North was not denied the advice that is usually proffered by the amateur and the volunteer to a Minister in the hour of crisis. Amongst Lord Dartmouth's papers is an unpublished memorandum drawn up by Corbyn Morris, who had a long record in the English Customs service, dated January 1775 and 'presented by permission of Lord Dartmouth to him and to Lord North.' The principal provisions of his plan were these: The British were to retire from Boston; occupy Long Island, which was to be fortified and made the seat of Government, and cut all communications coastwise between the Colonies. All loyalists were to be invited to declare themselves and to be rewarded with special tariff advantages by Great Britain. Ten thousand Whiteboys, Hearts of Steel, and Highlanders were to be raised and sent out at once. Every fishing vessel was to be required to obtain a licence to fish in Newfoundland, subject to a pledge of loyalty. A systematic levy of natives was to be organised forthwith. A promise was to be made that no commodities in the Colonies should be charged with more than two-thirds of the duty paid in Great Britain: and the Councils and Assemblies of each Colony were to elect delegates to represent them in the British Parliament. There is nothing to show that North paid any attention to this bold and comprehensive scheme. He was certainly willing and even eager to find a way of escape, if war could possibly be avoided; but across the Atlantic

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the hour, whether inevitable or otherwise, was at hand.

At Boston General Gage was in chief command of the British forces. He was aware that the Americans were collecting warlike stores at a place inappropriately called Concord, about twenty miles away. These he resolved to capture or destroy. On the night of April 18th, 1775, a force was sent off on this errand. Next morning they arrived, to find the place held in force; and the first shots of the war were fired. The object of the expedition was accomplished, inasmuch as the stores were destroyed; but the return march became a retreat, and nearly a rout. At Lexington, on the road, a reinforcing party, under Lord Percy, averted disaster: but the British had lost about 250 in killed and wounded: the Americans less than 100. The first stroke had not been terrifying in its effect—unless it were on the minds of the British army and the American loyalists.

Even now, as the clouds gathered darker and more ominous, there was here and there a delusive flicker of light. The language of the Americans assembled in council had become fiercer and more insistent upon war. Before Lexington, Patrick Henry had told the Convention of Virginia, ‘there is no longer any room for hope . . . we must fight.’ Now they had fought; but not yet was the cry of peace drowned in the thunder of the coming storm. Congress met in May at Phil-

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adelphia, and the war party were naturally outspoken. But the moderate section, headed by Dickinson, secured a last hold on the crumbling structure of peace. North's overtures were rejected, but it was agreed that a petition should be prepared for dispatch to King George. It was as amicable and submissive as could be expected, and it was entrusted to Richard Penn. He hastened with it to England; but he might have been spared the journey. He did his best; but all the satisfaction he could get was a civil intimation from Lord Dartmouth that there was no reply. The King was 'not in the giving vein to-day': nor, indeed, can it be believed that there was still room for accommodation between two forces so far gone in angry conflict.

It was not long before a skirmish was to be succeeded by a battle. Gage had been reinforced; and three Major-Generals were sent to serve under him—Clinton, Burgoyne, and Howe. Meanwhile the Americans were preparing for action. On June 16th they occupied and entrenched a position on the Charlestown peninsula, north of Boston harbour. Next day Howe was sent to dislodge them. The royal army, in all the panoply of review order, advanced upon the irregular rabble, never doubting that they would flee before a well-dressed line of bayonets. Instead of this the disciplined line was broken twice, and twice was forced to flee before the fire of the rebel rifles. A third attack rolled up the defence, and the position

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was carried; but Bunker's Hill had gained an unexpected immortality. The English had learnt that the Americans were not cowards, and that the campaign was not to be a promenade. The Americans had gained some inkling of their strength, and of the feats they might achieve. The world, which was composed of the enemies of England, perceived at once they were going to be provided with a spectacle most congenial to their taste. According to Sir George Trevelyan, the Americans had in action 1500; the English 2200. He puts the loss in killed and wounded at 415 for the Americans, and for the English 1040, of whom no fewer than 92 were officers;¹ which proved that the attack required, and was not denied, the devotion of brave leaders, and that the American riflemen already knew their business. Mr. Fortescue² gives rather higher figures—1700 Americans, 2500 English. He says the Americans acknowledged 450 killed and wounded, which was 'probably true.' The total English loss he puts at 1150.

It has been explained that the Americans had to face awkward problems of finance.³ They were fighting primarily for exemption from foreign taxation: they must needs go gingerly when they had to tax their neighbours. And it cannot be said that this chapter of their story reads very well. They issued notes at once on the joint credit of the Colonies; and so steady and strong was the

¹ i. 315. ² *History of the British Army*. ³ P. 221.

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current of depreciation, that the last issue of ten millions in 1779 was estimated at no more than 259,000*l.* in sterling value.¹ As late as 1818 a traveller in the United States recorded that

‘the nation have not redeemed their notes nor I presume will they ever. . . . I boarded at the house of a widow lady in America, whose whole family have been utterly ruined by holding these notes.’²

The men who fell in battle were not the only ones who had to make sacrifices for the winning of independence.

There were two charges brought against the English upon which they have generally been condemned. It has been counted to them for much evil that they should have employed German troops throughout the war; and they have not escaped censure for enlisting native Indians. These accusations may be dealt with here. King George was disposed to be his War Minister, Foreign Minister, and Colonial Minister in his sole person. Finding it no easy task to raise troops at home, despite Corbyn Morris’s suggestions, he determined to recruit abroad. He sent some of his own Hanover troops to replace the garrisons of Minorca and Gibraltar, and these were passed on to America. He then hired contingents from the rulers of Brunswick, Hesse-Cassel, and Waldeck. It was the employment of these foreign mercenaries to fight English battles against England’s

¹ Stanhope, vi. 63. ² *Ibid.*

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colonies that shocked contemporaries, and still shocks historians. Frederick the Great made the detachments that passed through his territories pay toll as cattle. Chatham, as we have seen, cried aloud in the House of Lords. The Americans protested bitterly. It was an unhappy expedient; if anything could have aggravated the wrath of the patriots it would have been the interference of foreigners who had nothing to do with their quarrel.¹ Every lapse from discipline, all those violations of private property that come with an invading army, were used to the best advantage in proof of England's ruthless vindictiveness; she did not scruple to turn brigands loose amongst her struggling subjects. Nor was it a good stroke of business. Barrington had to admit that under the terms of agreement, England was to continue payment for a full year after the war should be ended; also, by an oversight, no reduction was to be made in proportion to the reduction of numbers inevitably caused by the waste of war.

But to set against all this, it must be remembered that George III. was Elector of Hanover as well as King of England; and there was nothing monstrous in this country profiting to that extent by the first item in his programme. It must then be borne in mind that the custom of the times permitted sovereigns to seek assistance in men or money from other sovereigns who had no

¹ Trevelyan, ii. 49.

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particular concern in their wars. It was the age of the mercenary and the soldier of fortune. At the moment the Dutch had a Scotch brigade in their service: the King tried to lay hold on this force, but the States-General refused.¹ He had to get an army somehow, and he set no precedent in borrowing from his neighbours. And, if we admit that it was ignoble of England to rely upon men who were not English to fight for her, we need not forget that the American army was not entirely composed of English Americans. They admitted men of all nations into their ranks, Germans, French, Poles. They had no scruple in profiting by the sentiment that brought her sympathy and supplies from Paris—Lafayette was made a major-general at the age of nineteen. More than a third of her major-generals were Europeans.² Finally the Americans, rather than give in, entered into an alliance with their traditional enemy. Mr. Fortescue does not join in the general condemnation. ‘In a state of such peril,’ says he, ‘the Government can hardly be blamed for resorting to the hire of mercenaries.’³ He allows for the spirit of the times and for recent practices, and judges leniently. We may decide, then, that although the employment of Germans was not a fortunate nor an admirable resource, it was not the blackest of all the black spots on the sullied record of the war.

¹ Lecky, iv. 242.

² Lecky, iv. 419.

³ *History of the British Army*, iii. 172.

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About the employment of Indians a good deal of cant was talked. Chatham professed a horrified indignation in the House of Lords; but it was made tolerably clear that he had been privy to their enlistment during the French wars, deny it as he would. There was an appearance of apology when a distinction was drawn between using them as scouts and using them as warriors; but unless the Heralds' College did Amherst grave injustice, he drew no nice distinctions; they gave him as his sinister supporter an Indian holding a wand, on the upper end a scalp proper. Franklin, in his autobiography, relates as a most ordinary and proper incident, how a congress of the different colonies, held at Albany in 1754, entered into engagements with the chiefs of the Six Nations in view of impending hostilities with France.

So much for the French wars. In the present case it was possible to draw distinctions, as Burke did, between the employment of natives against regular troops and against defenceless colonists. North was inclined to be apologetic. On November 20th, 1775, he told the House of Commons that there was never any idea of employing the negroes or the Indians until the Americans themselves had first applied to them. King George had no idea of trimming: the Indians, he wrote, must be employed, and this measure must be avowedly directed.¹ Sir George Trevelyan does not tell us much of the services rendered by Indians to the

¹ *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 331.

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Americans, but from the Journals of Congress we learn that in May 1776 it was resolved that 'it is highly expedient to engage the Indians in the service of the United Colonies'; and next month definite authority was issued to Washington and Schuyler to raise Indian levies. Washington's published writings leave it beyond doubt that he adopted the policy. To quote one authority: Washington's own biographer, writing of the year 1776, says:

'In consequence of letters which General Washington had addressed to the Chiefs among the tribes of Nova Scotia, a treaty was entered into between the Government of Massachusetts and the St. John and Micmac Indians in which the warriors of these tribes engaged to enter into the service of the United States on the same terms and for the same compensation which was allowed to American citizens.'¹

Sir George Trevelyan at all events tells us that Washington once wrote to Colonel Morgan of the Virginian Rangers urging him to 'dress one or two companies in the Indian style and let them make the attack with yelling and screaming as the Indians do.'² It is very likely safe to say, with the author of the *Political History of England*, that the Indians must by their nature have been drawn irresistibly into the fight on one side or the other; and we shall probably be right in believing with Lord Stanhope that they

¹ *Life*, by John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States, iii. 17. ² iv. 67.

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were more trouble than they were worth. Not even Burgoyne's eloquent and moral harangues could inspire them with an instinct of obedience and self-restraint. Sir George Trevelyan discredits a well-known legend. It has been related that two Indians were sent to escort into camp a young lady betrothed to one of the officers: upon the way they fell out in discussing their prospects of reward; and as a solution of the matter, slew their charge. Sir George says that her death came by murder in the ordinary course. But either way the presence of Indians may well have been a cause of anxiety and peril rather than of comfort.

Of Washington, the American commander-in-chief, no fresh account need be attempted. His place is secure amongst the men whom history acknowledges as great. Perhaps the best tribute to his name is Thackeray's passage in the sixth chapter of the first part of *The Virginians*. He was the antithesis of Napoleon; yet in one or two ways he resembled him. Like Napoleon he rose to leadership by force of character: his countrymen did not weigh and measure his achievements: they recognised his primacy, because they must. Like Napoleon he could suffer a reverse or a disaster without immediate collapse of reputation. Like Napoleon he had the military instinct; like him he had in even greater degree the genius of an administrator and the intellect of a statesman. Through good repute and evil he was inevitably the greatest American. Otherwise the two careers

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differed obviously. Napoleon held his own by the terror of his might : Washington overcame his domestic foes by the strength of his virtues. He had none of Napoleon's criminal ambition : it was his country, not himself, that he fought for. He threw off his allegiance to England reluctantly : having done so, he became a patriotic American as Napoleon was never a patriotic Frenchman. He had no gift of victory : he seldom won a battle and was often defeated. He had not Napoleon's talent for appropriating the credit due to others : it was not in him, for example, to make a personal triumph of a Marengo. He had none of Napoleon's resources in extracting from his country soldiers and supplies. The obstacles and problems he had to face were never of such vast proportions as those Napoleon created for himself ; but they were not less appalling in effect, and he met them with no less courage and determination. One seized, the other refused, a crown. Finally, they differed in this ; that Washington deserved the thanks of his country and got them in the end : Napoleon did neither.

But there is one legend about Washington that must be accepted with caution. Tradition maintains that he never told a lie. He did not lie like Napoleon, who was the father of lies, but he certainly appreciated the advantage of making the best of appearances. Sir George Trevelyan¹ says that Washington 'never

¹ ii. 109.

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romanced to any one.' Lord Stanhope is less confident. He tells us that Washington advised that companies should always be returned at twice their true strength with intent to deceive; and he is satisfied that it was the commander-in-chief's habit to manipulate figures in his dispatches.¹ In his dealings with the Indians Washington was not without guile. On January 27th, 1776, he wrote to Schuyler about an offer of assistance from the Caghnawaga Indians, who were pledged to neutrality :

'My embarrassment does not proceed so much from the impropriety in encouraging these people to depart from their neutrality, or rather of accepting their own voluntary offer, as from the expense. . . . I will endeavour, however, to please them by yielding in appearance to their demands, reserving at the same time the power to you to regulate their numbers and movements.'²

It is to be observed that Sir George Trevelyan, in spite of his assertion that Washington never romanced, is obliged to admit that

'When he deemed it incumbent upon him to practise deception, he showed capabilities and aptitudes which placed him on a level with the most famous masters in the higher branches of the art.'³

Remembering his record in the case of Indian allies, we may indeed discern another resemblance to Napoleon's methods in the issue of the appeal to the men of New England to

¹ vi. 248.

² *Writings*, iii. 263.

³ iv. 4.

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‘repel an enemy from your borders who, not content with hiring mercenaries to lay waste your country, have now brought savages with the avowed and expressed intention of adding murder to desolation.’¹

To the Governor of New York State he wrote, concerning reinforcements :

‘I should think it well, even before their arrival, to begin to circulate these ideas with proper embellishments throughout the country.’¹

Napoleon frankly admitted that a statesman ought to be perfect in the art of telling lies.² Not even Washington could dispense with this adjunct to the equipment of a statesman-soldier.

Gage, the British Commander-in-Chief, was not marked out for fame. After Bunker’s Hill, he was summoned home, nominally to advise the Government ; but America knew him no more ; and Howe became Commander-in-Chief.

Late in the year an expedition was sent under Montgomery and Benedict Arnold to invade Canada. Its advance was not without large successes : the forts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point were captured. But the leaders were disappointed in their hopes of Canadian sympathy. Carleton, who opposed them, was equal to the emergency. The siege of Quebec was a failure, and after many months the expedition returned whence it came.

Such was the situation at the end of 1775.

¹ Trevelyan, iv. 159, 163.

² *Life*, by Fournier, i. 154, note.

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And even now there were men who held the language of peace. Amongst Lord Dartmouth's papers is an unpublished letter from Dr. J. B. Chandler to his friend the Rev. Charles Inglis in New York. It is dated October 30th, 1775, and reports that

‘Lord North, however misrepresented and abused, has always been desirous of an amicable settlement, and were your leaders as much disposed for it as he and Lord Dartmouth are, the deadly wound would begin to heal on all sides before Christmas.’

Mr. Wilkins, he says, has drawn up a plan of pacification for Lord North, and a final appeal will be made at the meeting of Parliament:

‘But let not this be construed as a mark of fear. Neither the Nation nor the Ministry is intimidated, nor have they any Doubt but the Colonials can be reduced sooner or later. None of the European Nations have any appearance of designing to interfere.’

The Opposition, he goes on, is contemptible: trade is unimpaired. The Russians have offered as many troops as may be wanted—which was untrue, but may be noted as a sign that the enlistment of foreigners was not necessarily regarded as sinful. The Americans, he concludes, are already feeling the yoke of a military tyranny; they must shake it off before their freedom has been taken from them.

It was presumably the outcome of this lingering hope in the bosom of Lord North that, when Lord

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Howe went out to America next year, he was commissioned, with his brother, to enter into negotiations for a settlement. And here followed a touch of burlesque in the middle of the tragedy. To add to all the misunderstandings and blunders that had gone before, this effort must needs be frustrated because Washington was not to be addressed by his military title. A letter to 'George Washington Esquire' was returned unopened. In the commission subsequently entrusted to Lord Carlisle in 1778 it was laid down that any style or title required was to be conceded.¹ General Howe, indeed, said he would give Washington his rank now, if he had to write: but the Admiral brother could or would go no further than 'Esquire,' which caused his diplomacy to be of no avail.

It might have been urged that no slight had been inflicted. In the eighteenth century, generals were not always addressed or spoken of by their title of rank. The Americans themselves observed no settled habit. The *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Lee, Esquire, of the 44th Regiment*, affords abundant evidence of this. Lee himself writes to Franklin that 'we have brought Mr. Howe to his *ne plus ultra*.' He writes of 'Mr. Wolfe'; and gives an official return of the 'Forces encamped on the Delaware under the command of His Excellency George Washington Esquire, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of the United States of America.'

Lord George Germain wrote of 'Mr. Washing-

¹ Trevelyan, iv. 387.

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ton,' as late as 1781. General Clinton, on the other hand, habitually referred to 'General Washington.' Colonel Laurens, another American, wrote of 'Mr. Howe.' But Congress, no doubt, was on its dignity and suspicious of affront. Franklin, who was an old friend of Lord Howe's, was permitted to visit him with one or two colleagues, but there was no approach to reconciliation. Congress, in fact, had strange purposes in mind. At one moment they thought of asking Frederick the Great to be their King, and bring his best general to conduct their war for them.¹ Then they contemplated inviting Charles Edward to come and rule over them. It is said that Sir Walter Scott used to declare that he had seen the memorial conveying this invitation. It is not forthcoming now.² Far more practical than this, Congress on the Fourth of July 1776 passed the Declaration of Independence, abolished the word Colonies, and created the United States of America.

Meanwhile, things were going badly in Boston. Howe was, in fact, besieged. Orders from home had carried Clinton to the Carolinas, and the strength of the garrison was depleted. Howe found himself outmanœuvred : ³ in March 1776 he evacuated Boston, and sailed away to Halifax. Thence he prepared to descend on New York and embarked his troops in June, without waiting for reinforcements. Washington was there to oppose him. Howe landed his troops at Staten Island and

¹ Trevelyan, i. 174.

² Stanhope, vi. 185.

³ Trevelyan, i. 389.

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waited. His brother, the Admiral, arrived in July, and the attempted overtures ran their futile course. With August came Cornwallis and Clinton from the Carolinas; some reinforcements from home; and the Germans. Then followed active and successful operations. Howe crossed to Long Island. On August 26–27 the Americans were driven out of their positions into Brooklyn. They were not followed up, and on the night of the 29th they were skilfully withdrawn across the East River to occupy New York. A fortnight later Howe made his attack. The Americans were forced to retire, and after a hot fight at Haarlem they fell back to the north and were finally driven across the Hudson River into New Jersey.

It has been made a reproach against Washington that he sought to anticipate history by thirty-six years and to devote New York to the fate of Moscow. There is no doubt that there were plenty of advocates of this policy: it was openly and generally debated. Washington considered it, and it entered into his correspondence:¹ but we may acquit him of the deed. Houses were in fact fired, and it was estimated that a quarter of the city was destroyed before the outbreaks were suppressed. But if Washington failed to provide against the mischief, it was not wrought by his instructions or at his instigation. He might indeed have been forgiven if he had taken a desperate resolve. His army was not seasoned

¹ Lecky, iv. 356.

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and disciplined to endure defeats : they bore themselves well as a rule in action, but there was no steadiness, and a fatal tendency to confusion and collapse. 'The game is pretty well played out,' he wrote in a moment of despondency.

But the game was not played out at all. Before the end of the year Washington was to gain his most notable victory. His plight was evil enough. Congress, deeming the fall of Philadelphia inevitable, had retired to Baltimore. He himself had retreated across New Jersey to the Delaware. Howe, after his success at Haarlem, had returned to New York. Cornwallis was able and willing to keep the Americans on the run; but having pursued them into New Jersey he was stopped at Brunswick by Howe, who had once more taken the field.

In the middle of December, Howe announced that the campaign was finished and that operations were to be suspended until the spring. He turned his face cheerfully towards New York, taking Cornwallis with him. His army was provided with winter quarters at various detached posts about New Jersey. But he had reckoned without Washington.

At Trenton, on the Jersey side of the Delaware, lay a strong force of Hessians under Ball. On Christmas Day 1776 there came a furious blizzard. The Hessians made the best of it with such good cheer as they could command. Washington, on the other hand, devoted the day to other purposes.

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At night he launched his army under Greene and Sullivan through the ice and snow across the river from the west: in the morning he fell upon the garrison, almost literally caught them napping, and utterly defeated them. Amongst his officers were two destined to be famous in later years: Monroe was there, not yet the author of his Doctrine; and Alexander Hamilton, less familiar to Englishmen, perhaps, than he deserves to be, was seen marching with his battery and 'patting his gun as if it were a favourite horse.' Cornwallis, who was on the point of sailing for England, flew to the rescue; but—to make a long story short—Washington, with consummate tactical sagacity, pushed forward fearlessly; and after a winning fight at Princeton, drew his army safely off to Morristown, where he was allowed to remain unmolested for four months—January to May 1777. Of this dashing enterprise Mr. Fortescue has written:

'It was difficult for a man to divine that Washington, who was credited with all the blunders of the last campaign, could be capable of movements so brilliant and so audacious.'

Washington's generalship in the weeks that followed the invasion of Long Island had won him little credit. The American cause was languishing. Now, in a few days, all was changed. His reputation was established: what was of even greater importance, American credit was raised suddenly in the eyes of Europe. Regular troops from

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Germany had been squarely beaten by the levies of untrained colonists. Credit in Europe was what America needed. No sooner had Congress proclaimed their Independence than her envoys were sent flying to the divers Courts to seek formal recognition. But their position was equivocal, and their manners so ill attuned to the stately usages of diplomacy, that sovereigns and ministers were perplexed and shocked, and kept them at arm's length. Only in Paris was their welcome warm. Silas Deane had gone there first. Towards the end of 1776 came Franklin and Arthur Lee. Deane and Lee won no laurels, and deserved none; but Franklin from the first was something of an idol. First, without official recognition, but not much incommoded on that account; afterwards, as acknowledged representative, he held throughout a position as eminent and secure as can be found in the annals of diplomacy.

The year 1777 was upon the whole favourable to the Americans. Lord George Germain, who had succeeded Dartmouth as Secretary of State for the Colonies, being himself an old soldier, set about ordering the campaign from home. His strategy was to hold the Hudson River and isolate the New England States. A force under Burgoyne was to march from the North; Howe was to advance and meet him; and a third force under St. Leger converging from the west was to join them at Albany. Whatever chance of success this scheme might have possessed was frustrated

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by the action of Howe. He first made an excursion into New Jersey ; returned with nothing done ; then determined to push on to Philadelphia. It has been said that Lord George, out of sheer carelessness and laziness, allowed his instructions to Burgoyne to go out by one ship, and delayed what should have been concurrent orders for Howe until another day.¹ However that may be, Howe went to Philadelphia. Clinton was left in New York, too weak to send supports to Burgoyne, and the project ended in disaster. The Americans began with successes. St. Leger's force, nearly all local levies and Indians, were attacked and beaten by Benedict Arnold at Fort Stanwix. An expedition, composed principally of Germans, was sent by Burgoyne into New England, to be defeated by Stark and his militia at Bennington. But the crown of misfortune was reserved for the General himself.

Burgoyne had been home on leave and had discussed with Germain the plan of campaign which was destined to such grievous miscarriage. His appointment to the Canadian command had so much offended the gallant Governor, Sir Guy Carleton, that he sent in his resignation, and then loyally set about doing his best to help the man who had superseded him. In the camp of the enemy something of the same kind was going on. Schuyler was in command ; second in command was Horatio Gates. Gates, oddly enough, was Horace Walpole's godson ; his mother had been

¹ Mr. Fortescue on this quotes Fitzmaurice's *Shelburne*.

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housekeeper to the Duchess of Leeds and a friend of the maid of Walpole's mother ; which seems an inadequate reason for the connection. Gates was a conceited man and an inveterate intriguer. He had tried his hand with Washington the year before ;¹ now he was bent on supplanting Schuyler, who was a better general and a better man than himself. He obtained sick leave and went direct to Congress, where he did his lobbying so adroitly that in March he was given the command. The New York Convention then elected Schuyler to Congress that he might go and plead his cause ; this he did to such good effect that in June he was reinstated. But in August, Gates got the upper hand again ; then Schuyler, subduing his resentment, stayed where he was, unattached. Burgoyne, meanwhile, marching South, retook Ticonderoga in July—a feat of arms that gave King George such keen and premature delight. Thence he moved on slowly through dense country, without tidings of the reinforcements he relied upon meeting. He was advised to retire, but he shrank from a confession of failure that must have damaging results. Moreover it was too late ; his communications were cut, and he was being surrounded. There was plenty of fighting at Hubbardstown and Stillwater, and afterwards at Bemis Heights, where Benedict Arnold displayed his qualities as a brave and resourceful leader. Gates was jealous and relieved him of his command ; Arnold paid no

¹ Trevelyan, iii. 98, note.

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attention, and in the next battle (October 7th) he acquitted himself no less valiantly.

Meanwhile Clinton was doing his best. To a friend he described his perplexities :

‘In my position, not having heard from General Howe for six weeks, not knowing where Washington was, having left a small force in New York, a communication of 140 miles between Albany and New York to open and keep, the important post we had to garrison, it was rather too greatly daring to attempt it ; but I determined to venture 1700 men under General Vaughan to proceed up the river and feel for General Burgoyne and if possible to assist his operations. . . . All this I had done when I received a letter from the Commander in Chief . . . to send him full 6000 men.’

The attempt failed. Burgoyne was trapped and overwhelmed, and the end came at Saratoga on October 17th. His fighting force was not much more than one-fourth of the number of Americans under arms ; but even so he refused to surrender without honourable conditions, and these he managed to secure. But they were deliberately violated by Congress. The captive army were to be properly cared for and sent back to England as soon as possible. Burgoyne had occasion to complain of the quarters allotted to officers and, being fond of pompous phrases, protested that ‘public faith was broke.’ Congress professed to see in this an attempt to coerce them and, in spite of Schuyler’s protest, they broke faith on a large scale. The prisoners were most improperly cared

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for, and prisoners they remained until the last day of the war.

Meanwhile Howe had sailed to the Delaware River; changed his mind; sailed away again; reappeared in Chesapeake Bay (August); fought for his footing; and at Brandywine on September 10th inflicted on Washington one of those defeats which might have served to end the career of a less illustrious commander. Philadelphia was occupied on September 26th. On October 4th there was a fierce battle in the suburb of Germantown. The Americans were in the losing vein and once more they were forced to retire, and again permitted to retire unmolested: but their conduct in this engagement particularly impressed foreign observers and notably Frederick the Great. The resolution of the struggling Americans was proved to be inflexible. Within the army, it is true, criticism was not wanting. Sir George Trevelyan prints the lament of a warrior poet:

‘I then said I had seen another battle o’er,
And it had exceeded all I ever saw before.
Yet through the danger I escaped without receiving harm,
And providentially got safe through firing that was warm.
But to my grief, though I fought sore, we had to retreat,
Because the cowardice of those on our left was great.’

There was some savage work around the forts on the river; but by November, Howe was com-

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fortably established in the city, whilst Washington with his ragged remnant prepared to spend the winter at Valley Forge, where they were to endure afflictions of which one cannot easily read without a shudder. That any stalwarts should have resisted the temptation to go home, and that any kind of military discipline should have been preserved, is a fine testimony both to the spirit of the men and the character and valour of their general. Even he seems to have given way to some extent. 'I am convinced he would do good if he took more upon himself in the future than he has taken in the past,' wrote a German critic, as though he detected a failure of nerve. And little wonder if it had been so. To add to his heavy burden of responsibility, he was to be further harassed by a new conspiracy formed by Conway, and supported by the irrepressible Gates. Forged letters were put in circulation, and nothing was left undone that the malignity of jealous rivals could devise. But Washington's star was not to decline: he triumphed over his enemies. Moreover, it may well be that his inaction was deliberate. If he played a waiting, it was not a losing game. Howe's winter season partook of the nature of a prolonged carnival, of which the programme need not be published. However, he grew weary of pleasure, and he was not content with the prospects of support from home. In December he resigned. In February 1778 his resignation was accepted, and Clinton, who was

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at home on leave, was appointed to succeed him. On May 18th a pageant was prepared for Howe's delight, worthy of Versailles in its palmy days; a week later he departed in glory as great as if he had spent his time in destroying Washington's army instead of providing amusement for his own.

And still the language of compromise had not been abandoned in the House of Commons. In December 1777 North promised to bring in some proposals of a conciliatory nature early in the new year; and politicians could still believe that the Americans might be brought to terms. William Pulteney wrote his opinions to Germain. He admitted that the Americans were demanding independence; but our conditions were really better for them, and all that was needed was a lucid explanation. Thus he goes on:

‘But a great deal depends even upon the words used in expressing the concessions we mean to make and I am persuaded that if the conciliatory propositions of Lord North had been canvassed with an American beforehand it would have been so expressed as to convey without ambiguity what I believe was meant by it, and the effects would have been very important.’¹

But concessions and phrases were not, for the moment, occupying the thoughts of the Americans. In March 1778 France informed England that she had recognised the United States and had entered into a treaty of alliance. The two Powers recalled their ambassadors from London and Paris; and Eng-

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

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land had another enemy on her hands. It was not a propitious moment for trying to bring the Americans to a spirit of reason and moderation; yet a Commission was even now on its way to seek terms of accommodation with Congress. Lord Carlisle, William Eden, and ex-Governor Johnstone were the members. No sooner did they reach Philadelphia than Eden wrote to his brother a glowing description of the country and a very gloomy account of their prospects¹ (June 15th). In an undated letter to North² he declines further emolument for himself and Lord Carlisle on the ground that in their object they had been entirely unsuccessful.

They were to treat on the basis of any terms short of independence. It was in fact Chatham's policy: but Government might have known that they were wasting time and trouble, and inviting certain rebuff. North knew this well enough: he was only humouring the futile aspirations of sentimentalists, and avoiding the unpopular expedient of proclaiming disagreeable facts. He was not prepared to speak hard truths to the peacemakers and admit that he saw no hope of escape that way. His action, however, was significant and important: it involved England's formal renunciation of the right to tax. On August 8th, 1778, he wrote to Under-Secretary Knox:

‘Great care must be taken now in everything we say and write not to give our enemies in

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34415. ² *Ibid.*

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America the least pretence to say that we do not mean sincerely, and that when we have brought the Colonies to treat, conjointly or distinctly, we mean to disavow our Commissioners.'

And on August 15th :

'Care should be taken that nothing in any letter written in these times to America should look like an intention to disavow the Commissioners. The use that would be made by our enemies of any circumstance of that kind would be to raise an opinion in America of our intending to deceive them, in which they have been too successful on former occasions and which they consider as one of their principal means of preventing any reconciliation with Great Britain. The letters from hence (though it is impossible to deny that the Commissioners have exceeded their instructions) should not give the least ground to suspect that we will not confirm any agreement they may make. I am more of this opinion since I do not expect that any treaty will take place yet. As the Commissioners will probably come away *re infectâ*, it is right that the Colonists should suppose that the whole extent of the Commissioners' offer would have been granted, which, indeed, would be supposing no more than the truth, for, as little pleased as many people are with the terms, I do not think the Nation would refuse them if they should produce an immediate peace. Should matters turn out less favourably for the Americans hereafter, the remembrance of what they have lost will operate strongly for us and against France : it is therefore of great importance that they should not consider the offer as merely captious and insidious.'

¹

Even Germain professed to be sanguine, and North found that he must be careful what he said

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.

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if he was to keep up appearances. On October 29th, 1778, Lord George wrote to Knox :

‘ Governor Johnstone is seemingly in good humour with the Ministry, at least he makes no complaints and is very communicative. He says peace may still be had if we show ourselves in a situation to make war, and if the opinion can be destroyed that we mean to grant Independence to America as soon as the Parliament meets. Dr. Franklyn has assured the Congress that Mr. Hartley acquainted him that such was Lord North’s resolution and therefore that it would be folly for them to treat upon any other terms. . . . You may imagine Lord North is much displeas’d at such a misrepresentation of his intentions.’¹

But there was little evidence to support these witnesses for peace, and Mr. Lecky says ‘the moment was one of the most terrible in English history.’

The entry of France into the arena forced upon England a change of policy. We have seen that George III., no doubt with sore reluctance, at once perceived that operations on land must be curtailed. Germain agreed, or obeyed, and sent orders for the evacuation of Philadelphia, forgetting, however, or neglecting to tell Carlisle, who was on his way thither with his mission. On June 18th, Clinton withdrew his army. The heat was intense, but for strategical reasons he dared not go by sea. On the one hand was the risk of meeting the French fleet; on the other, the danger of leaving New York open to a rapid

¹ Hist. MSS. Com., H. V. Knox Papers.

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descent on the part of Washington. His march entailed much suffering on his men, and many died of exposure to the sun. Washington pushed him hard, and there was a hot rearguard action at Monmouth Court House, where Cornwallis distinguished himself. Not without difficulty Clinton was successful in withdrawing his army free from disaster to their destination in New York.

D'Estaing was in command of the French fleet, but he decided not to attack New York. An attempt upon Rhode Island was arranged in conjunction with an American land force. But nothing came of this. Admiral Howe met the French fleet: their action was interrupted by a storm; and D'Estaing retired to Boston. His conduct was fiercely criticised by the disappointed Americans, who had no enthusiasm for their new allies. Amongst the Patshull papers is an unpublished letter from G. W. Kempson to Lord Dartmouth dated November 4th, 1778. After divers observations he goes on:

‘It is impossible the French can have obliged the Americans by this alliance. It was entered into reluctantly and has too much the air of a bargain upon the juncture to have produced anything but mutual distrust. That they should have failed, therefore, in their first great joint effort upon so important an object as Rhode Island is perhaps the most seasonable event that could have befallen us. The Americans will naturally betake themselves to old prejudices to account for it as to the native Inconstancy, Perfidy, and customary misfortunes of the French upon American ground.

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. . . Should an alliance be established between France and America, England would in a few years be only the third naval power on the Atlantic, whereas it is essential to her existence as an independent State to be the first.'

Hereafter the scene of action is to a large extent transferred to the West Indies, where it is less easy and, for our purpose, not essential to trace the changes and chances of war in accurate detail. It will suffice here to follow the fortunes of British arms upon the American continent. At the end of 1778 there was another abortive expedition into Canada, led by Lafayette. Washington disapproved of this project, and it was carried out without his concurrence. Next year, the warlike operations ashore were less momentous; but Spain declared herself France's ally in June, and the thoughts and eyes of Englishmen were turned rather to their own shores than to the seaboard of the American continent. On the top of this there came the armed neutrality which bound together the northern Powers, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, to protect the neutral flag at sea against England. Prussia and Austria joined later, and England had all Europe in active or passive hostility. It is true that nothing memorable was accomplished by this league, which Catharine called an armed nullity; but Holland went further than the rest, and at the end of 1780 England was compelled to declare war.¹

¹ For stricture upon this policy and conduct, see Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, ii. 78.

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In the early days of 1780 Clinton, taking his orders from Germain, sailed with five thousand troops and some American loyalists from New York for South Carolina, with Charleston as his objective. The voyage was stormy and prolonged ; but in May, Charleston was surrendered by the Americans, who had already failed to capture Savannah in the next State, Georgia. In June, Clinton returned to New York, leaving Cornwallis to carry on the campaign. For the moment the outlook was tolerably bright, and in August a thorough defeat of Gates at Camden made it brighter. The language of the Americans was despondent : but there was a significant gloom about the dispatches that Clinton was sending home from New York. At the end of the year Necker, who had always been an advocate of a peace policy in France, made an offer to treat, proposing an armistice, with the existing situation recognised. The King of England was not defeated yet, and he repudiated the suggestion, because it implied the admission of independence ; which showed great courage and firmness of mind, but a sad obliquity of vision. And so the climax was deferred until next year.

Meanwhile there has to be told the least lovely episode in a story not overflowing with sweetness. Benedict Arnold was perhaps the most recklessly brave and alert-minded of all the American leaders in action. His services had been many and most creditable. Like some of his comrades he lived

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more or less in an atmosphere of intrigue, and those were not wanting who envied and endeavoured to hinder his career. In 1777 he was passed over for promotion with others to the rank of Major-General, and he resigned in a rage. A few weeks later the omission was corrected, and he sallied forth to win further laurels in the neighbourhood of Saratoga. Here he was riddled with wounds, and being, for the time, incapable of action, he was made Governor of Philadelphia, after the evacuation by the British army. He had lately married a beautiful wife, and this, coupled with a good conceit of himself and a love of display, led him into extravagant and provocative habits. He soon had critics and enemies buzzing round him, willing and ready to sting. A charge of mal-administration, implying fraud, was brought against him and he was tried by court-martial. He was acquitted; but a reprimand for imprudence was added. As if this were not enough to enrage a man of arrogant and impulsive temper, he was at the same time flouted by an adverse decision in an appeal that he had made for repayment of money advanced out of his own pocket during the Canadian expedition of 1775. He had never liked the French alliance nor the French allies. He resolved to turn traitor.

Early in 1779 Clinton received the first tentative and anonymous overtures from the renegade; but it was not until next year that they came to business. Arnold was sent to command at West

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Point, a position of the first strategical importance. This he undertook to betray to the British. Clinton's agent in the nasty work was a staff officer of great promise and high character named André. How the plot was laid ; how it miscarried ; how Washington made a dramatic entry on the scene ; how André was captured, and how Arnold escaped and crossed over into the British lines, should be read in some history book. It is lively enough as it stands, and would well deserve the attention of an author in search of material for a stirring short story.

André's doom was certain, and the manner of it was deplorable. He only asked that he might be shot as a soldier, not hanged as a spy : yet the ignoble gibbet was his fate. Arnold on the other hand received welcome and promotion amongst his new friends : he served against American troops on American soil : then he came to England, where we can take leave of him rubbing shoulders with better men at the levée of King George.

In 1781 the position was this. Cornwallis, in the south, was for active operations : he had the support of the King and therefore of the Cabinet. Clinton, in New York, preferred a policy of inaction by which he counted on exhausting the enemy. Cornwallis was confronted by Greene, a capable and honest soldier ; but him he met and routed at Guildford Court House on March 15th. Cornwallis advanced into Virginia and thenceforward

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he and the commander-in-chief were at cross purposes. Mr. Fortescue says that matters were made worse by the interference and contradictory instructions of Germain. Each general wanted the other to come over and help him; and a quarrel began that was not to end here and now, but stored up matter for unseemly recriminations when the war was over and both of them were at home in England.

Washington was making a judicious feint on New York: Clinton believed there was to be an attack in force and sent to Cornwallis for reinforcements. Cornwallis wanted to reverse this strategy, and there was apparently misunderstanding as well as obstinacy to account for his action. Clinton afterwards wrote this inelegant but not obscure sentence:

‘I mean for ever to declare that to the Cabinets having given a preference to the Plans of a second in Command made on partial information, to that of a Commander in Chief only as information till too late, serve in great measure to impute the loss of that campaign and of America. Lord North, Lord G. Germaine, Thurlow, Lord Chancellor, Lord Sandwich, Lord Amherst, Lord Gower the last not least—to these the thanks of the Nation are due in great part for the loss of America.’¹

It was in this condition of confusion that Alexander Hamilton delivered a sagacious judgment that is worth preserving. There was a

¹ *Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy*, i. 42.

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scheme on foot to kidnap Clinton, and Hamilton was admitted to the secret. He protested at once : they knew the best and the worst of Clinton : if he were removed, it was more than likely he would be replaced by an abler man. He was content with one no better than Clinton.

Washington's movement on New York having served its purpose, he now turned to the south and, joining forces with Rochambeau and his French force from Rhode Island, marched into Virginia. Cornwallis had received no reinforcements. He withdrew to Yorktown, on the west shore of Chesapeake Bay, and there took up a defensive position. His object was to wait for, and get into touch with, the fleet which was to come to his relief. But for the moment the French were in superior force at sea ; and instead of the British Admiral, came the enemy's ships under De Grasse.

Cornwallis was outnumbered beyond hope of resistance. His conduct preceding the disaster has not escaped criticism and censure : but history has never ascribed shame to him because on October 8th he surrendered to the enemy and brought the war to a close. Captain Mure of Caldwell, writing to Andrew Stewart, M.P., two days later, declared that they had been besieged by an army of 20,000 men ; that the defending force had no more than 3200 fit for duty, besides 2000 sick and wounded. This may have been an exaggeration ; but not on a great scale. The garrison has been

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stated to have shrunk from 7000 to about 4000, and the forces brought to assist in the siege to have been not far short of 18,000. Mr. Fortescue gives the enemy 16,000, and says that the defenders, who had mustered 7000 British and Germans at the beginning, had 6630 left to surrender, of whom 2000 were in hospital.

Whilst the British flag was being lowered, Clinton was busily embarking a force intended for its rescue and protection. He set sail, but arrived to find himself too late, and sailed back again to New York.

The ceremony of capitulation was the occasion of one of the dramatic coincidences of history. Cornwallis gave up his sword to Laurens. Colonel Laurens, his son, had in the previous year been sent on a mission to the Dutch and had been taken prisoner at sea. He was now a captive in the Tower; and the Constable of the Tower was now the prisoner of his father.

It has been said that with the fall of Yorktown came the end of the war. Peace was not concluded next day. It was not signed for more than a year. The Americans were weary of campaigning, and it might have been a desperate undertaking to call upon them for new and prolonged efforts; but they were not likely to throw away their present advantages. The difficulty was to find a way out that did not entail avoiding their engagements with France. 'America, whatever should be our proposals, would not treat without France and

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their whole plan was not easily to be penetrated'; so Grafton wrote in retrospect of the situation in August 1782. In England the news of the disaster was recognised as the last word. North could stand no more and made a resolve, which this time he kept, that he would get out of office. The King was the last to yield. He still had obedient ministers and a tractable majority in Parliament. In November both Houses voted the Address without difficulty, not a syllable being admitted that foreshadowed capitulation or the recognition of independence. But everybody knew that we were beaten. In the West Indies there was to be more fighting with the sea Powers, but on the continent of America the sound of battle grew faint and intermittent, and presently was heard no more. Thenceforward the story passes into the province of diplomacy, and we may follow it in the chapters that relate the various deeds of Government.

CHAPTER VIII

PARLIAMENT AND PEOPLE

IT is difficult for us, who consider it a scandal that one constituency should be considerably larger than another, to appreciate the anomalies and absurdities of the system under which the House of Commons was elected before 1832. There was a closer affinity between the Parliaments in which Lord North sat and those of the Plantagenet kings, than between the first and the last of which Mr. Gladstone was a member. In the counties, indeed, all freeholders were electors. In 1780 the Society for Constitutional Information conducted an energetic campaign, demanding amongst other things that the franchise there should be restored to its original basis which, they claimed, had been something approaching universal suffrage, until Henry VI. had imposed the existing limitations. They also asked for annual Parliaments and equal representation.

But it was in the boroughs that the situation was preposterous. The Tudor and Stewart sovereigns had made constituencies in much the same spirit as they bestowed peerages. Henry VIII. created seventeen new boroughs; Edward VI.,

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fourteen ; Mary, ten ; Elizabeth, twenty-four ; James I., four ; Charles II., two.¹ Some of these, for social or physical reasons, were in time denuded of their population ; but they were never deprived of their representatives. Many of the principal towns had no member : even in those where elections had a semblance of reality, there was no settled order. In one, the electors were the mayor and corporation ; in another, all ratepayers ; in the next, potwallopers—all those who could make an appearance of being self-supporting. Many constituencies, nominally independent, did no more than elect the nominee of a neighbouring magnate. Others were admittedly private property. Lord Monson's borough of Gatton was an enclosed park. Lord Huntingfield returned a member for Dunwich, which had for a long time been lying at the bottom of the sea. Lord Beverley's seat represented one house : Mr. Bankes's three or four.² Old Sarum, the best known, was and is a lonely mound. In other cases there were voters, but they were unaccountably obsequious. The grandees appear to have been able to rely implicitly on their obedience ; which is surprising, when we remember that elsewhere citizens sold their votes as obviously as the patrons sold and bought entire boroughs. Wilkes aggravated his financial troubles by trying unsuccessfully to bribe the electors of Berwick, before he bid with better fortune for the favours of Aylesbury. Burke on

¹ *History of England*, Spencer Walpole, i. 134. ² *Ibid.* 141.

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the other hand sat for Bristol on terms not unlike those of to-day, and he refused to bribe. Pitt was introduced into Parliament by Sir James Lowther, who for once used his vast powers with discretion. Fox was put in for Midhurst by his father, who bought him a seat as naturally as he might have bought him a partnership in a brewery. North sat, not without cost for Banbury, under the shadow of Wroxton, all his days in the House of Commons. The case of Gibbon is noteworthy. Mr. Eliot, afterwards Lord St. Germans, was a great borough-monger in Cornwall. Some seats he sold : some he seems to have given away. ‘By the friendship of Mr. (now Lord) Eliot,’ writes Gibbon, ‘I was returned (1774) for the borough of Liskeard.’ It was understood that he was to support Lord North and the Court party. This in fact he generally did, although his conscience was evidently sore at times. Meanwhile he spent most of his leisure at Brooks’s with Fox and his friends. Now and then he scrupled not to speak disdainfully of North, and once went so far as to vote with Fox against him. Notwithstanding this, North made him a Commissioner of Trade in 1779. Says Gibbon :

‘My acceptance of a place provoked some of the leaders of Opposition, with whom I had lived in habits of intimacy ; and I was most unjustly accused of deserting a party, in which I had never enlisted.’

Either Eliot had changed his mind, or Gibbon

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had misunderstood his bargain, for he found himself dismissed.

‘I lost my seat,’ he laments. ‘Mr. Eliot was now deeply engaged in the measures of opposition, and the electors of Liskeard are commonly of the same opinion as Mr. Eliot.’

On September 3rd, 1780, he wrote a letter of reproach and remonstrance to his faithless patron, pleading that he had consistently voted according to his pledges, and using language of humility that one would not expect to have from a great philosopher-historian.

Seats were advertised for sale like yachts and grouse moors. George Selwyn, in a spirit of economy, sold Ludgershall for 9000*l*. Lord Spencer had to pay 70,000*l*. for Northampton. The Corporation of Oxford offered to re-elect their members if they would put down 7500*l*. for payment of municipal debt. The sequel is variously told: the pleasantest version records that the members appealed to Parliament for protection; the mayor and corporation were summoned to the bar and sent to prison; and during their confinement the members were able to bring them to a satisfactory compromise.

About 1770 it was calculated that amongst the members for England and Wales

254 represented less than 11,000 votes altogether.

56 represented about 700: in no case more than 38 apiece.

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6 represented not more than 3 apiece.

Middlesex with London and Westminster had 8 members; Cornwall, 44. 192 members held office under the Crown.¹

The report of the Westminster Committee in 1780 accounted for the total of 513 members as follows:

130,000 freeholders elect 92 members for 52 counties.

43,000 citizens, freemen, and others elect 52 members for 23 cities and 2 universities.

41,000 citizens, freemen, and others elect 369 members for 192 towns and boroughs.

Of the last, 50 were returned by 340 electors. 6000 electors returned 257, or more than half.

In 1782 Lord Rockingham declared that no fewer than 70 elections were turned by the votes of 11,500 Revenue Officers, who knew very well on which side their interests lay.

Most curious of all, the large unenfranchised towns seem not to have been indignant, and were even known to boast that they had nothing to do with the disreputable practice of politics. Manchester, Leeds, and Halifax had actually submitted to disfranchisement at the hands of Richard Cromwell. In 1785 Birmingham refused to petition for Reform.² This apathy is not easy to explain. In early days when members could claim wages from their constituents, the desire to

¹ *Political History*, x. 106.

² *William Pitt and the National Revival*, J. H. Rose, 202.

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be unrepresented was natural enough. That motive no longer had effect, and one is driven to the conclusion that in the period under review there existed no political spirit in the country: the public had neither education nor ambition for politics, and only cared for a vote as long as they could sell it. In December 1779, at a meeting of the freeholders of Middlesex, an anonymous address was read which contained this sentence: 'I am sometimes afraid that the present inattention of the nation to affairs of State is a symptom of approaching dissolution.' The classes who turn elections now had no more thought of influencing the Cabinet then than of sitting in it. It was not part of their business. Statecraft was the province of their betters, and to them they left it. Indeed, the signs of the times were if anything reactionary. The nabobs from India had come into politics and paid such prodigious prices for their seats that even honest English peers were being elbowed out, and the voice of the people was more than ever dependent on the value of a bank bill. 'It was not until 1780 that the spirit of the country rose,' says Walter Bagehot, and he quotes Sir George Savile: 'Hitherto I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room. Now I am returned by my constituents.' And he sat for a county.

In fact some counties appear to have been no better than the boroughs. It was stated by the Lord Advocate in Parliament, during the debates of 1831, that within the memory of man an election

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in Buteshire had been carried through by one individual. He voted himself into the chair, called the roll, answered his own name, moved and seconded his own nomination, declared himself duly elected, and ended the business with a vote of thanks to the Chairman. In all Scotland 1303 electors returned 45 members.¹

We need not examine closely the interesting question of the part played in the electorate by women: but it seems clear that sex was not an absolute bar. A woman could own a pocket borough. And there is evidence, difficult to discredit, that at all events as late as 1807 the right of certain women, presumably spinster freeholders, to vote was not disputed.²

The House of Commons must have been a pleasant place to belong to. 'The sessions were not exhausting and the company was agreeable. During the debates on the General Warrants in 1764, one sitting went on for seventeen hours, until seven in the morning; but that was an effort without precedent.'³ In 1781 Burke's bill for economic reform was read a first time on February 19th, and was then postponed. One of the obstacles to progress was that there was to be a benefit performance at the Opera on the 22nd, for 'Vestris, a favourite French dancer.'⁴ 'What Englishman does not sacrifice anything to go his Saturday out

¹ *William Pitt*, J. H. Rose, 277.

² *Annals of a Yorkshire House*, ii. 219; *Letter Bag of Lady Elizabeth Spencer Stanhope*, i. 142.

³ Stanhope, v. 77.

⁴ Walpole: *Last Journals*, ii. 445.

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of town ?' exclaims Walpole ; whose father had established the custom, to make sure of his hunting. North once wrote to the King that his friends promised to come up for the session ; but 'as it begins so soon after Christmas, probably not till after the holidays.' It must be remembered that they could not flit to and fro as quickly and comfortably as we can now.

Although it was essentially a gathering of the 'gentlemen of England,' their manners were not irreproachable. One member thus addressed Lord North :

'They call us (Opposition) a rope of sand. I will tell the noble lord in the blue ribbon what he and his colleagues are. They are a rope of onions, for they stink in the nostrils of the whole country.'

Another inveighed against North's 'whimpering and whining, shuffling and cutting' ; and next day apologised, explaining that he had been drunk.

The Speaker was a great personage. He had not become the man above party that we revere. And he was still 'Speaker.' In 1777 Sir Fletcher Norton made himself the spokesman of the House with a vengeance. A vote had been carried for payment of the King's debts ; and in submitting the measure for royal approval, Sir Fletcher admonished the Sovereign in the most democratic and uncourtly language. But even Speakers were not sacred to the squires, who were accustomed to

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speaking their minds freely in the hunting field or over their claret. Criticism had perhaps become less crude than it had been in Elizabeth's day, when a member once reported of an address by Mr. Speaker, 'Marry, methinks I heard not a better ale house tale told this seven years.'¹ But the chair was not yet endowed with the majesty which is not to be affronted with familiar and flippant speech. A contemporary skit represents a supporter of Lord North declaring that if he were Prime Minister, 'As soon as I'd told 'em my mind I'd make old Periwig pop the question directly.' It may be remarked in passing that Sir Fletcher was not a man whose manners and character earn respect. He once told the Prime Minister, Grenville, that he wished instead of shaking his head he would shake some sense out of it: and after he had been promoted to the Chair he informed the House that he cared no more for a resolution of its members than for the oaths of so many drunken porters in Covent Garden.

Wraxall says that, in his recollection, classical quotations were not common: Barré always translated his Latin for the benefit of the country gentlemen. Nor were they the only politicians whose education was defective. Shelburne speaks of Lord Carmarthen, Secretary of State, as being so ignorant that he was a danger to the country in combination with the Duke of Dorset, Ambas-

¹ *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, Aikin.

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sador at Paris, who 'spoke of the ceded islands as if he really knew where they were.' But Carmarthen was not a lout.

It was according to etiquette that ministers should appear in court dress; the Opposition were at liberty to attend in 'great-coats or habited in frocks and boots.'¹ When North resigned, curiosity was aroused by the appearance of the new Government, 'having thrown off their buff and blue uniforms, now ornamented with the appendages of full dress.' Lord Nugent had recently been robbed of some valuable lace: 'I shrewdly suspect that I have seen some of my laced ruffles on the hands of the gentlemen who now occupy the Treasury Bench,' he declared. Nugent appears to have been the funny man, who is never lacking in a House of Commons. During the debate on a Police Bill, he moved to have himself included in the clause that made it compulsory for watchmen to sleep in the daytime: his gout was so bad that he was unable to get any sleep at all.

That the House was complacent to the verge of callousness may be inferred from the strange experience of Dr. Nowell. This divine was appointed one year to preach the memorial sermon on January 30th. He did so; and was duly rewarded with a vote of thanks for his pains. Then some inquisitive soul discovered what had apparently escaped the notice of the congregation—if indeed a congregation there had been—that in

¹ Wraxall, i. 172.

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this discourse, George III. had been likened unto Charles I. in a spirit of flattery and commendation; upon which another motion was carried decreeing that the vote of thanks should be cancelled and the sermon burned by the common hangman. A further motion that the service should be abolished was defeated by 125-97: and it held its place in the Prayer-book until 1859. This story leads to some observations upon the clergy of the day. That there were devout and holy men amongst them need not be doubted. There may have been ascetics who truly deplored the licence of the times. The Bishop of Oxford, for example, urged that a tax on half the pomps and vanities he beheld would suffice to meet the expenses of the war: to which the Duke of Richmond replied that he could conceive no more proper objects of taxation than the 'fat high-fed Churchmen and rich Prebendaries.' The Duke was not without justification here if we may believe the story that the Bishop of Rochester asked one of his Prebendaries what was his time of residence: 'My lord, I reside the better part of the year,' was the answer; for he only visited the Cathedral city during audit week.

Maria Theresa wrote to her son Joseph in 1780: 'Stability cannot exist apart from religion and morality. The English are nearly all deists, infidels, and freethinkers.'¹ The Government set no very good example, for Sunday was the usual

¹ *Maria Theresa*, by Mary Moffat, 354.

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day for Cabinet meetings and Cabinet dinners; and men's dinners, as we know, were apt to be boisterous gatherings. It was a matter for comment and surprise that George Grenville was a regular church-goer. The clergy set no better example of sobriety in high places. Walpole says that Drummond, Archbishop of York, was 'a sensible worldly man, but much addicted to the bottle.' It caused no more than a laugh when a Doctor of Divinity, returning home after an Oxford dinner, was discovered hauling himself unsteadily round the rotunda railings of the Radcliffe Library, bewailing the length of the street he had to get along. Men who rose to the highest stations in the law suffered no hindrance from the devotion of unnumbered hours to burgundy and claret. Thurlow was a powerful drinker. Northington, crippled with gout, declared that if he had known that 'these legs were one day to carry a Chancellor he would have taken more care of them when he was a lad.'

Moreover we need not be afraid of the comparison if we ask how their generation differed from ours in extravagance and love of amusement. In the Budget statement of 1777 North asserted that thirty men-servants were kept in some houses. Walpole, who preached radicalism and practised all the refinements of caste privilege, averred that there was no living in this country under 20,000*l.* a year: 'not that that suffices; but it entitles one to ask a pension for two or three lives.' Nor did

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he scruple to pay Reynolds 1000 guineas for the portrait of his nieces.¹

In 1776, when the war was raging, we are told that 'London was sunk in pleasure and dissipation.'² Water-parties and gambling are especially named. Nothing in fact appears to have come between society and its enjoyments. When the King's aunt died in 1772 a ball at the Pantheon was less crowded than usual, not from motives of delicacy, but for the extraordinary reason that many people were not prepared with mourning.

'Run on, mad nation ! pleasure's frantic round,' sang a poet in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1783. During a period of general distress, and in the midst of riots, masquerades went on. At one of these the Duchess of Ancaster appeared dressed as a man ; a clergyman came disguised as a cab-driver. The night was followed by a daylight breakfast, during which the company pelted the starving rabble in the street with food and empty bottles. It was found that Charity sermons met with no response. And here is a description of polite life taken from the *Annual Register* of 1764 :

'A great disturbance was created at Ranelagh House by the coachmen, footmen, &c., belonging to such of the nobility and gentry as will not suffer their servants to take vails. They began by hissing their masters, they then broke all the lamps and outside windows with stones ; and afterwards putting out their flambeaux, pelted the company in the most audacious manner with brickbats, &c.,

¹ Stanhope, vi. 489.

² Walpole, *Last Journals*, ii. 17.

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whereby several were greatly hurt, so as to render the use of swords necessary. In the scuffle one of the servants was run through the thigh, another through the arm, and several more otherwise wounded.'

Gambling was probably more general and more reckless now than at any period of the world's history — of which folly the most shameless exponent was undoubtedly Charles Fox. Racing had charms second only to the card-table. 'Now for the more important point of the Turf,' wrote Lord John Cavendish to the Duke of Grafton, after opening his mind on the gravity of a political crisis.

We have already heard of the recurrence of strikes, riots, and disaffection. Seditious documents were posted all over the town. 'Nobody talks of anything under a revolution,' says Walpole, with the further comment that men were none the less intent on securing household appointments and making the most of Court festivities. Speaking of a later year, Lord Morley makes the curious admission that

'cool observers who saw him daily accused Sheridan of wishing to stir up the lower ranks of the people by the hope of plundering their betters.'¹

Both the Navy and the Army were undermined with insubordination and discontent, if Horace Walpole can be trusted. According to him in February 1783 the 66th Regiment mutinied at

¹ *Burke*, 188.

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Portsmouth, under orders for India. This was composed. In March

‘great disorders were stirring, especially at Portsmouth, where sailors remained very mutinous and would not sail for India without being paid their arrears, which there was not money enough in the Treasury to discharge; and though Lord Howe himself more than once went to Portsmouth, it was with the utmost difficulty they could be restrained.’

In May the Coldstream Guards were near mutiny; but ‘General Conway by prudence and severe instructions pacified them.’¹ We have already heard that some years earlier a cavalry regiment had adopted the methods of highway robbers.

Little wonder then that there were pessimists in the land. Here is part of a speech delivered by Thomas Day to the freeholders of Cambridgeshire in 1780:

‘A wider gulf has been placed between the Sovereign’s and the people’s friends than separated Lazarus and Dives in the Scriptures . . . Amidst the wrecks of public liberty and the ruin of this nation, there is little chance that I shall ever be deprived of at least a competence; and he that possesses that is a welcome guest in every land;—he may with impunity desert the falling fortunes of his country and there is an asylum now opened in the west, which will gather together the brave, the wise, and the good from all the winds of Heaven.’

And here are extracts from two letters from a minor permanent official:

¹ *Last Journals*, ii. 580, 601, 619.

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R. W. COX TO WM. WARD.

‘*Jan. 9. 75.*

. . . ‘A bankrupt public, a starving populace, mark this unhappy era. Even those who were somewhat sanguine formerly respecting our situation as a nation seem now to think the case very desperate.’¹

‘*Oct. 31. 76.*

. . . ‘I hope you gentlemen Tories will have your bellies full by and bye. “If,” as Horatio says, “the ruin was but all your own”—But, alas, we poor Whigs—real lovers of our country—are involved in the fatal consequences attending your measure.’²

There was much distress due to causes not in themselves evil. The advance of knowledge and the results of industry and invention were to create a transition stage that involved vast displacement of labour. The Duke of Bridgewater’s canals brought with many boons inevitable afflictions. Between the years 1790 and 1794 many village industries were extinguished and entire village populations disappeared.³ Hargreave’s house was destroyed by the mob as early as 1768. But there were other agencies at work, not in themselves beneficent. In 1766 General Conway declared that, in consequence of the American troubles, nine out of ten artisans in Manchester were unemployed. In 1767 the Derbyshire colliers, finding the wheat in the market was at 8s. 4d. a bushel and only 5s. in London, seized what they could and paid the London price.⁴ The cost of living and house rent were high, and wages were low: riots were constant

¹ *Benenden Letters*, 126.

³ *Political History*, x. 260 sq.

² *Ibid.* 142.

⁴ *Stanhope*, v. 88.

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and general. The wages of labourers in Surrey were from 8s. to 10s. ; in Wiltshire, 6s. to 5s. ; in Lancashire, under 5s.¹ The population of England and Wales had been in 1710 something over 5,000,000. In 1760 it had grown to over 6,500,000 ; in 1780 to 7,800,000. London was still so small that west of Buckingham Palace lay open country ; and it was one of King George's grievances against Grenville that he would not agree to the purchase of the ' entire front ' in 1765 for 20,000*l*.²

Barbarism was near the surface of the social plane. 160 crimes were still liable to capital punishment. In 1767, 80,000 people assembled to witness an execution. In 1773, 20,000 were present to behold a woman burnt for murdering her husband ; and this ferocious penalty was not annulled until 1790.³ Theft above the value of forty shillings was a capital crime. People still believed in witchcraft ; when some children died in Suffolk from eating ergot of rye in 1762 the neighbours were of one mind in ascribing their death to sorcery. The virtue of the King's healing touch was not yet discredited. But in the midst of darkness there were encouraging gleams of light. There were not wanting the few righteous men for whose sake the people should be spared. No philanthropist ever served his fellow-men more valiantly than Howard, who, in the face of a depravity worse than that of savages, set out to improve the condition of

¹ *Political History*, loc. cit.

² Stanhope, vii. 499.

³ *Political History*, loc. cit.

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the wretches confined in prison. The influence of Wesley was breathing hope and consolation throughout the land. Raikes was founding his Sunday Schools. Man's duty to his neighbour was beginning to be recognised.

In polite society, manners had reached a more advanced stage. It is true that the instincts of primitive man still sought satisfaction or revenge in slaughter. Duels were nothing accounted of. Fox, Shelburne, Wilkes, Pitt : all had to risk their lives to show that they were men of spirit and of honour. North, although he had some hot moments in the House of Commons, never had to take the field. Otherwise society was essentially urbane ; punctilious to a degree not suited to our age. There was less hurry in those days and less crowding. Those who were in the movement revolved in a small circle : every one knew what every one else was doing : and long engagements were unknown.¹ There was much formality. Men in their familiar letters were precise in the use of compliment and titles. Lady Shelburne in her private diary always wrote of her baby as Lord Fitzmaurice, and told her husband that she had been to see Lord Fitz in his bath. Even Chatham seemed to be oppressed with the rarity of a higher atmosphere whenever he breathed the air of the Court. Yet it was not an age of chivalry. Men's dinners were the common rule. Women's company was not sought and cherished as it is now.

¹ *Political History, loc. cit.*

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‘In my time at Devizes,’ says Lord Shelburne, ‘when families visited each other, the men were shown upstairs to the men, the women to the women. The men immediately sat down to wine or beer, and when they had done, sent to tell the women.’¹

The nabobs, indeed, were asserting the power of riches : but the privilege of caste was not greatly diminished. Burke’s exclusion from Cabinet office has generally been attributed to the monopoly that was claimed by rank. On the other hand it was possible to rise by merit. Apart from the Mansfields and Thurlows, men like Rigby and Barré and Dunning made their way as far as their abilities were fit to carry them. Dyson, a Lord of the Treasury, was a tailor’s son. Bradshaw, a Lord of the Treasury and a Lord of the Admiralty, had been Lord Barrington’s servant. Colonel James Keene, ‘an Irish officer of no fortune,’ was Secretary to Hertford, the Lord Chamberlain : he married ‘the homely maiden sister’ of Lord Dartmouth, and so secured the goodwill of North, who put him into the Board of Trade. Sir John Hawkins, who played a leading part in the Middlesex Elections of 1774, was son of a builder. He was notorious for his drawling speech, of which faithful record was made when he came to die. His epitaph ran :

‘Here lies Sir John Hawkins
Without his shoes and stawkins.’

¹ Fitzmaurice, i. 39.

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General Smith, whose father was a cheesemonger, became a nabob and M.P. Prejudice denied him admission to Almack's, upon which he opened a rival gaming-house and drew thither the fine flower of White's and Almack's as well. Bishop Hurd was son of a Staffordshire farmer; and so on and so on. Chatham himself, who yielded political precedence to no man, was not of patrician descent. Lord Holland's elopement with the daughter of the Duke of Richmond had shocked society; but far more startling were the wayward marriages of Lady Susan Fox-Strangways with O'Brien, an actor; and of Lady Henrietta Waldegrave with Beard, a singer. Finally, a word must be said of Mackreth and Rumbold. Mackreth had been a servant of Mr. Arthur, of Arthur's Club, where he was known as Bob. He married Miss Arthur; became 'Master' of White's Chocolate House; M.P. for Castle Rising; and a knight. Rumbold had been a waiter at White's: he went to India, became a nabob, and was eventually Governor of Madras. Hence the rhyme:

' When Mackreth served in Arthur's crew
He said to Rumbold, "Black my shoe,"
To which he answered, "Yea, Bob,"
But when returned from India's land
And grown too proud to brook command,
He sternly answered, "Nay, Bob."'

If it be possible to draw a comparison, and upon that to base a just conclusion, it may be permitted to lay down this proposition:—In the

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latter part of the eighteenth century Parliament was a far more desirable place, and politics were a far more desirable pursuit, than they are now. In private life the aristocrats enjoyed a dignified supremacy that must have made life as congenial as man is ever likely to find it on this planet; but the sum of human happiness was not so great, and the sum of human misery was certainly not less, than it is in this age which, in accordance with the immemorial usage of mankind, we declare to be the most wicked and most grievously afflicted.

CHAPTER IX

PRIME MINISTER

‘**N**ORTH succeeded to what I believe he himself, and every man in the kingdom at that time, thought a forlorn hope.’ So wrote a political observer¹ who looked back upon the year 1770. North, indeed, did not come into power with a display of original strength calculated to arouse enthusiasm. His Cabinet was to a great extent made up of survivors of the wreck. Weymouth, Rochford, and Hillsborough were still Secretaries of State. Hawke stayed at the Admiralty, and Barrington at the War Office. North’s appointment appears to have taken some people by surprise. ‘Time, and that a very short one, must clear up the riddle, and for the present a suspense of conjecture naturally takes place here.’ So wrote Chatham when he heard that Grafton had resigned. There was to be no flattering and pressing invitation such as he himself had sent to North when he was forming his own Government in 1776. Nor was this to be expected. Chatham had left office as an incurable invalid less than two years before. He was back

¹ Sir Philip Francis.

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again, apparently fit for duty ; but he had not at command a large and attached following. The Whigs were not prepared to form a solid coalition under his control. Moreover North was essentially the King's man, and the King would have none of Chatham. After one of North's first successes in the division lobby, Rockingham wrote to Chatham :

‘ Lord Chatham will not be much surprised at this majority, as his lordship must have seen for some years that it is neither men nor measures, but something else which operates in these times.’

The something else was presumably the influence of King George. It was soon made manifest, however, that Chatham was not going to resign himself to the position of a contemplative spectator. He was girding himself up for some of his most spirited efforts and he was not too proud to make new friends. He has been blamed because he spurned the overtures of Rockingham in 1766. Now he was ready to open his arms and embrace him. Later in the year (November) he was protesting that he would be glad to communicate at all times ‘and more especially in the present moment when public dangers of every sort are imminent, and the ruin of the kingdom together with the destruction of this free country seem, to my apprehension, immediately at hand.’

Meanwhile, North was Prime Minister ; and whatever his shortcomings may have been, he deserved the title although, curiously enough, he himself repudiated it. ‘He never would allow us

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to call him Prime Minister, saying there was no such thing in the British Constitution': so wrote his daughter, Lady Charlotte Lindsay, to Lord Brougham in 1839. We have already learnt that the position was not as clearly defined as it is in our day. Walpole had been unquestioned head of his Government. In 1766 Grafton was titular head, but Chatham wrote and spoke as avowed leader. When Chatham retired, Grafton said he must now consider himself head of the Government, which, after all, was technically his already: and in 1783 he resented Shelburne's 'views of becoming Prime Minister, whereas I never consider his lordship but as holding the principal office in the Cabinet.' It is true that North could not produce a party of his own. The Chatham and Rockingham Whigs were definitely in opposition; but amongst the Ministers were the Bedford Whigs—Gower, Sandwich, Weymouth. North was, indeed, always more or less be-whigged, for all that he was the King's man and has always been written down a Tory. But there could be no question of primacy in the Cabinet: there was no lieutenantancy as between Grafton and Chatham earlier; no rivalry as between Rockingham and Shelburne afterwards.

North never called himself a Tory, but it is not unfair to say that his speech bewrayed him. In 1782, after he left office, he wrote to Lord Lisburne: ¹ 'I wished to explain to my friends how I stand with

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 2136.

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respect to contending parties in the House of Commons. I am connected with neither . . . ' In these later days we shall find he opposed Reform on the stoutest Tory principles. His last vote in the House of Commons was given against the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1787, which he opposed for reasons of Church and State. He may not have been as stiff as Brougham's Tories, who 'celebrated their revels by libations to Church and King—most of whom regard the clergy as of far more importance than the gospel:'¹ but he was habitually averse from projects of innovation and indulgence. That he opposed what are called popular measures deliberately and frequently, we have learnt from his own confession.

The editor of the Letters of George III. has pointed out that in the two preceding reigns rivalry was not so much between distinct factions as between mutually jealous sections of the Whigs; and that if there was little difference between a Tory and a Jacobite there was even less between a County Whig and a Tory who had accepted the principles of 1688, of which, according to Burke, the Rockingham Whigs were the true disciples and representatives.² In 1783 Horace Walpole wrote that no set of men could be classed to any denomination:³ and in 1790 Gibbon wrote: 'I cannot repress my indignation at the use of those foolish, obsolete, odious words, Whig and Tory.'⁴

¹ *Historical Sketches*.

² Donne: Preface.

³ *Last Journals*, ii. 621.

⁴ To Lord Sheffield, Aug. 7th, 1790.

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We have seen what Brougham took to be Tory principles. There is a more carefully considered definition of the Whig Party by an eminent Whig :

‘An union of any number of persons of independent minds and fortunes, formed and connected together by their belief in the principles upon which the revolution of 1688 was founded and perfected ; and by the attachment to the present form of our Government to all its Establishments and Orders, Religious and Civil ; and the test of whose conduct as a party must consist in their never supporting, proposing, or resisting, any measure in or out of Parliament, to which, if they were possessed of power, if they were Ministers of the Country, they would not give equally the same treatment.’¹

A profession so moderate in tone and so moral in principle that no Tory need be ashamed to adopt it.

Be that as it may, if a distinction did exist it is not difficult to make North a Tory by the evidence of his own speeches. When the Americans were appealing personally to the King for protection against a persecuting Parliament, North said this :

‘If he understood the meaning of the words Whig and Tory, he conceived that it was the characteristic of Whiggism to gain as much for the people as possible, while the aim of Toryism was to increase the prerogative. In the present case, Administration contended for the right of Parlia-

¹ Portland to W. Windham, *Windham Papers*, i. 201.

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ment, while the Americans talked of their belonging to the Crown. Their language therefore was that of Toryism.’¹

He recognised the distinction : but if his voice was the voice of Parliament, his policy was the policy of the Crown.

That he was not eagerly intent on humouring and pandering to the people we may gather from two speeches made respectively a little time before and a little time after he became First Lord. In 1769 :

‘ If his Majesty’s subjects are disaffected those trumpeters of sedition have produced the disaffection ; and it is nothing more than the effect of their artifices that they retort as a reproach upon administration. . . . The servants of the Crown are indeed threatened with the fury of the multitude, and the drunken ragamuffins of a vociferous mob are exalted into equal importance with men of the coolest judgment, the best morals, and the greatest property in the kingdom.’

And in 1770 :

‘ That a number of ignorant mechanics and rustics have been treated in one place with beer and broke windows in another is true ; are these the grievances into which we are to enquire ? ’

And that he was, upon the other hand, no jealous assailant of prerogative we may with equal justice conclude from this speech upon the Civil List in 1780 :

‘ To expose the necessities of ancient and noble families to the prying eye of malignant curiosity—to hold up the man who has a pension to the

¹ *Parliamentary History*.

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envy and detraction of him who hates him because he has none—to prepare a feast for party writers, and furnish materials for magazines and newspapers which would magnify and misrepresent every circumstance,—these are the bad effects; but I know of no good ones that could result from such indiscriminate exposure, since the Civil List money was granted freely, and without restriction or control, to the person of the King.’

Summing up the evidence we ought surely to decide that if there were such beings as Whigs and Tories, North was emphatically a Tory and that it is beyond question right that his portrait should hang, as it does, in the Carlton Club.

So much for his Toryism. Now for his leadership. Did he bring to the discharge of his duties as First Lord the spirit and habit of a born commander? The answer can hardly be affirmative. Horace Walpole is our inevitable guide: unhappily he is as contradictory here as in most cases. When North was appointed in 1770, Walpole sang praises of his activity, resolution, ability, and sense: he was echoing all this in 1773. When the war was nearing its disastrous end, he changed his mind and, in his wrath, ascribed the failure to the lack of these very virtues in the Minister. He always liked North personally: but at first he suspected him of cupidity: ‘he disliked his post and retained it only from hopes of securing some considerable emolument for his family’—so he wrote in 1772. Elsewhere he talks of North being mainly intent on securing some

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vacant pension : but he seems to have changed his mind again in this, and the insinuations cease. But it must be remembered that the writer was not a sunny-minded man : he quoted with approval his father's maxim 'that very few men ought to be prime ministers, for it is not fit that many should know how bad men are.'¹ At the end of the war he wrote : 'I have a very bad opinion of him as a minister' : yet on two occasions at least he admits that North was the strong man of the Government—in 1779 to Lady Ossory, 'I do not think your neighbour so much in the wrong in apprehending a rebellion if Lord North was turned out : the nation would be consequent in resenting it' : and in 1780 to Mann, 'they (the party) can no more go on without their Treasurer than without their pensions.'

In his bad temper Walpole would write hard things. Once he describes North as 'very ungracious and indolent.' He says that Lord Mount Stuart told him that North had refused some request, and 'I would have knocked him down for his rudeness if it had not been in the House of Commons.' And of some transaction with Rigby, he writes, 'Lord North with his usual ill-breeding and indifference seemed insensible of this favour.' But this is certainly not a judgment that finds common support, nor is it consistently upheld by the writer. Wraxall says, 'I cannot recall the idea of Lord North unconnected with

¹ To Mr. Cole, September 18th, 1778.

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those engaging and elevated qualities of mind and of deportment which conciliated the affection even of his opponents.' It is true that he once makes the startling statement, 'in fact Lord North from his first entrance into office early in 1770 never had been popular': but he returns to his gentler manner thus; 'Lord North knew that however odious the American war had become he was personally beloved.' And again: 'Lord North was individually beloved in and out of the House even by those who most disapproved and opposed his measures.'

North was undoubtedly well liked: yet he was not a popularity hunter. He did not rely on the co-operation of his cook nor the blandishments of his own table talk. Here is a letter written late in his term of office (1780), presumably in reply to a remonstrance from Eden:

‘ *Bushy Park, Good Friday.*

‘ . . . What you say about cultivating interest by attentions and by a table is very true. I acted for some time upon that system and had no reason to disapprove of it. I had two reasons for discontinuing it. The first and the least was that my present income is not considerable enough to admit of much extraordinary expense. The second and principle reason is that now business in Parliament is so great and so uncertain that it is impossible to know how to fix upon any day for seeing one's friends. Five days in the week I go down to the House without being able to guess whether I shall not be detained there till one o'clock in the morning. Add to this *non sum*

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qualis eram . . . I hate my situation as you know well, but I will do whatever is thought useful to Government during my continuance in it.¹

At the same time Jenkinson at the War Office was writing to Robinson at the Treasury:²

‘The King’s civil words . . . have had their proper effect. I wish that Lord North knew how to use this instrument better than he does. One of his great errors is that he thinks that interest alone without any seasoning is the only motive on which men act.’

‘His nature is more influenced by importunity than by service,’ he wrote again: for Jenkinson considered that his own services had received inadequate recognition.

A man who does nothing to attract a personal devotion must possess rare strength of character, if he is to have an obedient and admiring host of followers. North’s colleagues in the House of Commons and his critics outside have no tribute of the kind to offer. Eden, who was not the most faithful of men, wrote: ‘I found Lord North at this period, exactly as in old times—irresolute, with a mixture of reserves and jealousies.’ Wraxall, who had less motive for private grievance, declared that North lacked authority and that he was too easy-going in the Cabinet—people would look at Chatham’s tomb with admiration and respect: those who knew Lord North would weep over his tomb. John Craw-

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34417.

² Hist. MSS. Com., Abergavenny Papers.

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ford, M.P., who was probably an entirely unprejudiced observer, wrote to Baron Mure in 1773 :

‘ Lord North is a very good member of Parliament (being a man of great readiness and wit), but I believe he is not a great minister, and that he has neither the extent of mind necessary to form large views, nor the boldness to carry them into execution.’

As to North’s influence and power, there is some amusing, and not very flattering, evidence in his correspondence with the Duke of Newcastle’s widow, soon after he became Prime Minister. The Duchess asked a favour for one of her family. On May 7th, 1770, North wrote from Downing Street :

‘ I am honoured with your Grace’s letter and think myself extremely obliged to your Grace for the most agreeable commission that has been put into my hands since, to the misfortune of the public and myself, I was advanced to my very troublesome situation. . . . You may securely rely upon my gratitude for the many instances of friendship I received from the late Duke of Newcastle. Nothing can tend to reconcile me to an office, of which in other respects I am not overfond, than the power it gives me of showing it.’¹

But unhappily the power was not there. On September 7th the Duchess wrote reproaching him severely for having done nothing; he had not even answered her last letter. To this North replied without delay: he vows that he lost no time in seeing the King; but he adds dolefully,

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 33082.

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‘his Majesty seemed much averse to granting offices for more than one life.’ Her Grace’s rejoinder is crushing: she is satisfied he has done his best, but ‘I must always lament your lordship’s influence being inferior to any other person at —— [? Court]. You need not be afraid of me.’

Apparently North did not conceal his disgust at this absence of encouragement from the Court, for Walpole speaks of a mark of royal grace which would silence him from complaining that he had no power.¹ But not even in the Cabinet could North always do as he desired. At Patshull House there is an unpublished letter from him to his dear friend Dartmouth which is a sad confession that he is not master in his own household:

‘My dear Lord,— I find that I cannot obtain the Secretary at War for Lord Lewisham and I find likewise that he expects an office for himself immediately and will think himself ill-treated if he has not. If he would be satisfied by your having an office with an engagement to give him the first respectable office that should fall, I could undertake to procure such an engagement from all the Ministry, for indeed you and your son are almost the only persons in the Kingdom whom we all agree in loving and esteeming. Unless you are both contented and in good humour with me I must be miserable, that is to say, miserable in a great degree, for happy I do not foresee how I can be in any event. I wish much to see you or hear

¹ *Last Journals*, i. 277.

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from you as soon as possible for my Colleagues
press me for the rest of my arrangement. Adieu,
My dear Lord,

‘Yours most affect^{tely},

‘NORTH.’

There is no date, but it should belong to 1778. In that year Barrington resigned the office of Secretary at War; and that year Lewisham entered Parliament. The young man's impatience might well have been rebuked by the most amiable of ministers; but Dartmouth was North's friend. He enjoyed the dignity of Privy Seal, and North probably meant that, this being so, his colleagues would think the family was adequately provided for.

‘As a minister he might seem harsh and still more often unfortunate . . . if not the greatest or firmest, he was certainly the most amiable of ministers.’

This is the opinion of Lord Stanhope,¹ and the preceding letters seem to give it confirmation. ‘Easy, good-natured, facing-both-ways Lord North,’ is the judgment of the author of *Alexander Hamilton*; ² and we shall find that vacillation was North's besetting sin. He was not constitutionally timid, although Walpole wrote spitefully: ‘Lord North, as usual, whatever was the subject, except on danger to his own person, treated the whole with mirth and ridicule.’ He had courage enough to make the best of a bad job. After one of the American defeats he apologised for his serenity thus:

¹ *Life of Pitt*, i. 49; ii. 160.

² By F. S. Oliver.

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‘Faith, my lord, if fretting would make me thin I would be as sorry as your Grace ; but since it will not have that effect, I bear it as well as I can.’

He was not a coward. Early in his ministry, during the Wilkes riots, his carriage was set upon and destroyed ; he was with difficulty rescued from the mob : but his speech to Parliament immediately afterwards was brave enough. He repeated his familiar avowal that he loved not office, but he promised that he was not to be driven out by threats or violence. In relating this episode Sir George Trevelyan says :

‘It was not fear of life or limb that called forth the tears which were running fast down the cheeks of one, whose ordinary habit was to trifle when brave men were anxious, and to laugh when wise men were grave. North in that bitter hour would have cheerfully accepted the fate of de Witt if . . . he could have preserved the self-respect of an English statesman. . . . The hapless minister . . . by gesture, voice, and manner, confessed himself the scapegoat of a policy which he detested and disapproved.’¹

To this tribute to North’s personal valour he adds testimony of a grateful disposition. Sir William Meredith had risked his life to rescue the minister from the mob : his brother was promptly presented to a desirable Treasury living.² During the riots that followed Keppel’s acquittal in 1779 it is recorded that North retreated on to the top of his house : but this was probably the most sensible thing he could do. During the Gordon Riots he

¹ *Early Life of C. J. Fox*, 419.

² *Ibid.* 422.

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was succoured by Mr. St. John, who was armed. When they asked whether he was alarmed, he made answer, 'I am not half so afraid of the mob as of Jack St. John's pistol.'

It was moral courage that he lacked; the fortitude that enables a man to decide swiftly and act unflinchingly. He instinctively shrank from responsibility and conflict. Hence his constant profession that he was unfit for his position and hated it: hence again his want of authority. When a man continually assures the public of his incompetence, the public are apt to take him at his own valuation and his word. We shall see that North surrendered with sad lack of dignity to his terrible subaltern, Fox, in 1774. But perhaps the surest test of a Prime Minister's authority is the part he takes in controlling foreign policy. Whatever office Chatham may have held he was always to be deemed the master of the Foreign Office. It is not easy to make out any claim of the kind for North.

When North succeeded Grafton he found that a dispute with Spain was developing into grave danger of war. The Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic had for years been disputed territory. In 1769 the English were established there. Early in the year the Governor of Buenos Ayres set out on an attempt to dislodge them; but finding in Captain Hunt and his ship, the *Tamar*, too formidable an obstacle, he sailed home again. In June he tried his luck once more. This time

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he found two small ships and an insignificant garrison. He attacked: a formal defence was made, but surrender was inevitable. The victor, whose name was Bucarelli, cunningly contrived that his own version of this exploit should be the first to reach Europe. He temporarily removed the rudders from his Majesty's ships, to prevent them from carrying news. When the report of all that had happened came in, there was great anger in London. Spain had attacked a friendly Power—at all events a Power with which for the moment there was peace—and had laid insulting hands on the ensign of the British Navy. Remonstrance led to negotiations, which dragged on throughout 1770. Some writers say that North displayed fine spirit¹ and was instrumental in averting war. His language in Parliament, we are told, was not provocative: he looked to a peaceful solution by means of diplomacy, and even suggested that the Falkland Islands were not worth fighting for.² His action, however, has left no decided trace in recorded history. Weymouth was the Secretary of State in charge: Harris, afterwards Lord Malmesbury, was Chargé d'Affaires in Madrid. Throughout their correspondence there is no mention of North, and the State Papers contain no evidence of his interference. This perhaps is negative proof: his contributions may have had no place in Foreign Office documents; but it may be noticed that Weymouth always

¹ *E.g.*, *Pictorial History*, v. 103.

² *Ibid.* 104.

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writes of the King's commands, never of his Majesty's Government ; and if this be not a form, it may well be the literal truth. It is further worth noticing that the *Annual Register* of 1771 devoted an unusual amount of space to this story, and nowhere is an allusion made to the existence of Lord North. Weymouth has been credited with resigning because the Cabinet would not support him in assuming a warlike attitude. North was cautious, but not a poltroon. Weymouth thought war inevitable.¹ Harris was more hopeful. The Spanish Government in fact were showing no symptoms of war fever. On December 17th, Harris wrote this letter :

‘ *Madrid, Dec. 17, 1770.*

‘ My Lord,

‘ The King and Prince of Asturias and the infants Don Lewis and Don Gabriel have passed this last week at Aranjuez, and although according to the usual custom it is expected they will return to-day, yet as the weather is fine and as there is much game, it is probable they may remain there a day or two longer. Monsr. de Grimaldi being with his Catholic Majesty on the occasion, it has not been in my power to see him lately, and of course I cannot write a very interesting letter to your lordship.’²

And he goes on in cipher to say that he is confident Grimaldi is on the side of peace.

Two days before this was written, Weymouth

¹ To Harris, November 28th, 1770, Record Office State Papers : Foreign.

² State Papers : Foreign.

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had resigned, and it may be believed that he acted less from a desire to make war than a nervous apprehension of having one on his hands.¹ The contemporary record of the *Annual Register* says : ‘ Lord Weymouth left his colleagues to shift for themselves and went out in order to make it a merit with those who should succeed.’² Lord Rochford, who took up his task, wrote on December 21st, ordering Harris to leave Madrid ;³ the Spanish answer was ‘totally inadmissible,’ and further negotiations were not to be considered. But war was avoided. In Paris, Choiseul was dismissed, and Louis XV., who was anxious to end his days in peace, brought personal pressure to bear on Charles III. He yielded ; and in January 1771 a satisfactory declaration was signed in London. England’s ownership was recognised, and Spain’s renunciation was flavoured with the sweetest diplomatic phrases that could be devised. The steps that led to this happy issue have never been distinctly traced. According to Wraxall, Sir William Gordon, the British Minister at Brussels, was sent to Paris, and so far contributed to the consummation that he was rewarded with a pension of 300*l.* a year from North, as minister, and a gift of 1000*l.* from the King.⁴

It is not easy to represent North as having come out in the character of a strong man. We have been told that his language was not provocative,

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, *ad verb.*

² *Annual Register*, 1771, 45.

³ State Papers : Foreign.

⁴ Wraxall, ii. 109.

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and that he looked to diplomacy to save the situation. On November 13th, 1770, he told the House of Commons that the trouble was caused by nothing but 'a pitiful island. . . . Could the intrinsic value of the Falkland Islands be deemed a sufficient cause for war?' Then, ignoring all that he had said in April 1769 and January 1770 of the readiness of the country for any emergency, he made this feeble apology :

'Everybody, except gentlemen in Opposition, knows that our fleets cannot be fitted out except when our trade is at home because sailors are at no other time to be had. . . . As the Ministry, therefore, could not arm effectually it was thought prudent not to appear to arm at all. If Great Britain had armed . . . France and Spain would have done the same, and not being under the same disadvantage would have done that effectually which we could have done only in part.'

To set against the favourable account which has already been given, we are bound to take notice of the unusually sharp judgment of the *Parliamentary History*. This is the official account of his speech on Dowdeswell's motion for papers on November 22nd, 1770 :

'Lord North now rose but lost his usual triumphing and overbearing manner. He was all civility and condescension, and it must be owned that in his humility he found words apt and fit for his condition. In some turns he did not want wit, especially in playing on a line that had been used at the beginning of the debate; but he paid severely for it in Mr. Burke's reply: and when

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Lord North came to the reasoning part, he made indeed a sad hand of it. He is not very remarkable as a reasoner and this night he was very poor.'

On January 25th, 1771, North presented papers, and in the course of the debate declared that he was ready to avow the part he had in it. He freely put himself for his life and his honour upon the House.¹ But when the papers were further considered on February 15th, he took no part in the debate.²

We may further illustrate North's attitude towards foreign affairs by looking forward. In 1780 Mr. Hussey and Mr. Richard Cumberland were sent on a mission to Spain to attempt an accommodation of peace. One authority says that 'the attempt at negotiations had been entirely in the hands of Lord North and Lord George Germain';³ and he lays stress on the fact that whereas Lord George was not unwilling to give up Gibraltar, Lord North told Hussey that 'Gibraltar was a forbidden word and must not pass his lips.'⁴ In the correspondence between the envoys and Germain,⁵ North's name is often introduced; but never as one would expect to find the name of Chatham. He is always quoted in conjunction with somebody else, as if the other was the real agent and North was only mentioned for form's sake. Nowhere are we told that he has spoken and that his word is law. A sincere attempt at

¹ *Parliamentary History*.

³ Adolphus: *History of England*, iii. 189.

⁵ Hist. MSS. Com., Stopford Sackville Papers.

² *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* 194.

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discovery has left the impression that he made no consistent effort to guide foreign affairs; that he considered they were not in his province. A remarkable avowal of this principle came from him when the fate of the loyalist in America was in debate. He declared that he had never set store by the assistance promised on the part of these men, who were now to be left to their fate; however, it was not in his department and was therefore no business of his. And yet he was sincerely anxious to protect them.

But it must not be assumed that North was incapable of understanding foreign politics. He kept himself acquainted with what was going on and could form opinions of his own. Putting opinions into practice was what he did not love. The progress and probable effect of affairs abroad are not entirely ignored in his correspondence or his conversation. Thus he writes to Eden in 1777 of conflicting reports of the intentions of France :

‘perhaps E—who is at heart a thorough American and at this present writing a Bear in the Funds may wish to drive us to some step that may bring on a war or at least sink the Funds. . . . We cannot do better than increase our strength gradually without embarking on any measure that can engage us in a dispute with our neighbours until it becomes absolutely inevitable, which I cannot say I think it at present.’¹

And again :

‘I do not love war, but in the present moment I

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34414.

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should not be sorry to see one in Germany on account of the Bavarian succession, provided it would completely occupy the French and the King of Prussia. I have two letters from Paris (from Lord S. and Mr. T.) which I am sorry to say put an approaching rupture with France out of doubt.’¹

There is no date on this letter, which shows a sharp change of mind: but it should be of the same year. It was then that there was a break in the line of the Bavarian succession; then also Lord Stormont was our representative in Paris. After the American war the King asked North whether he had any objections to the terms of peace. ‘To the French and Spanish certainly none,’ he replied; ‘but to the American’:² and this in spite of the fact that Loughborough was writing to Eden, ‘North must attack the peace at once’—if he did not, his party would desert him.³

In 1772 came the partition of Poland, and it has been made a reproach to England that her Government did not interfere; but North need not be arraigned because he did not hasten to the rescue like a brave policeman, with a combination of forces against him and no allies to back him up.⁴ Whatever his limitations may have been, it must be borne in mind that in the case of Gibraltar he was firm and sound when many good men were neither. This appealed to his conscience, and he was no more disposed to yield to the Spaniards than to the Americans. In December 1782, out

¹ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34415.

² *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 254.

³ Auckland, *Journals*, August 1783.

⁴ See Stanhope, v. 478.

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of office, he confided to Parliament a willingness to listen to argument; but in office he never showed any disposition to let Gibraltar go.¹

We may reasonably deduce from all this that North had not that type of mind for which foreign politics have a peculiar and engrossing charm. Those who have this instinct usually believe themselves qualified, and feel themselves impelled, to assume the functions of foreign minister. North was clearly exempt from any temptation of the kind; but it by no means follows that he was indifferent or blind to his country's risks and needs. Now, in 1770, he approved of an increase of the navy and incurred the savage vituperation of Opposition by consenting to the employment of press-gangs. For there was danger, so it was believed, of sudden attack by France. Choiseul was in a bellicose mood and conceived the project of employing the wretched Charles Edward as his catspaw or his ally. The story goes that this exiled monarch came to Paris for a council of war, but presented himself to the minister in such an inarticulate condition of drunkenness that he was immediately dismissed and told to go back to Rome. Wraxall says he knew a man who saw him at Genoa on his journey thither.²

‘We talk much of war, though many think it will come to nothing,’ wrote Cox to his gossip Ward³: and North seems to have been amongst

¹ *Political History*, x. 210.

² *Memoirs*, i. 308.

³ *Benenden Letters*, *vide supra*.

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the hopeful. Bradshaw wrote to Grafton in March : ' Lord North does not seem alarmed at the situation of France and Spain.' And for the present his confidence was justified. His concern for the Navy now laid up for him an uncomfortable ordeal in the House of Commons two years later. On December 2nd, 1772, on the Navy Estimates, he was asked to account for the money that had been voted in a hurry and was not required after all. His explanation was that ' from the hurry of the late war the ships were built of green timber, and upon the alarm, most of them were found unfit for service. The overplus had been applied for the purpose of repairs.' And it must be remembered that he had been assuring Parliament that the Navy was in apple-pie order.

These general observations are offered here with a view to forming some idea of the character and inclinations that North should be expected to display in the exercise of a Prime Minister's duties. In passing we may note that two of his private Secretaries were men of reflected fame. One was Beau Brummell's father ; and this will destroy the illusion of those who have believed that the Beau's parent was of the humblest class. His grandfather's station had been lowly ; but the father had already risen in the world. The other was Walpole's correspondent, Montagu, who, it is said, left North most of his money when he died.¹

North became Prime Minister at the end of

¹ *Letters*, i. 3, note.

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January 1770, and two of his earliest speeches were symptoms of the Tory spirit within him. On February 28th there was a debate on the Civil List: economic reformers wanted the King to produce some kind of balance-sheet for audit: North, on the other hand, held that a man could do what he liked with his own:

‘If we had refused the money last year, or given it reluctantly,’ he argued, ‘there might be room to examine into the application of the arrear: but giving it cheerfully, nay gladly, we acknowledged ourselves convinced with regard to the rectitude of the expenditure, and have . . . more foundation for an increased confidence in his Majesty than for arraigning his economy.’

On March 21st came a discussion on Grenville’s bill for trying election petitions. North was no ardent reformer of old ways. He ‘laid claim to object to the whole bill if, upon report, this particular objection which then appeared to it could not be removed.’ And on the 30th he added that ‘at present he had not had time to consider the measure . . . he therefore wished for a few months to consider it at leisure.’ But the bill became law. Welbore Ellis moved to postpone it two months; which meant rejection. North supported him and was beaten. On April 2nd he said

‘he did not intend to give any more opposition to the bill, though he owned he did not like it. Perhaps the House would not thank him for this declaration, as it must appear to proceed from

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necessity, having been beaten by so great a majority the day before.’¹

North was never famous for phrase-making, but in November of this year he came near to achievement. The question was whether the Attorney-General should have power to file information *ex officio*, and North got on to the subject of Junius :

‘When the feculence of his bad humours has worked itself off,’ he said, ‘the leaven of Junius will produce no new fermentation. He will then be despised for his very falsehood and malice that now gain him readers : his pertness will no longer be mistaken for wit, nor his impudence for spirit.’²

One is tempted to wonder whether Disraeli knew of this speech when he told Sir Charles Wood on the night of December 6th, 1852, ‘that petulance is not sarcasm, and that insolence is not invective.’

On March 5th, North made a speech of more immediate importance than any of these. He moved that ‘an Act made in 7th of his Majesty’s reign for granting certain duties . . . be read.’ His purpose was to repeal, in accordance with the decision of Grafton’s Cabinet last year, the various duties imposed by Townshend. Governor Pownall moved an amendment to include tea : and was beaten by 204–142. North in his speech said :

‘At the conclusion of the last session I concurred in opinion with the rest of his Majesty’s ministers relative to the expediency of writing circular letters

¹ *Parliamentary History.*

² *Ibid.*

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to the American governors promising to repeal upon certain commercial principles such parts of the act [of 1767] as were disagreeable to the people; and in this measure I concurred from a hope that kindness would recall the colonies to their former obedience, and prove a happy means of removing contention, without lessening the proper dignity of Government. Indeed, I heartily wished to repeal the whole of the law, from this conciliating principle, if there had been a possibility of repealing it without giving up that just right which I shall ever wish the mother country to possess, the right of taxing the Americans. But I am heartily sorry to say that the colonies . . . did not deserve the instance then shewn, for the resolutions became more violent than ever. . . . I am now perfectly satisfied that was the tax to be abolished, it would neither excite their gratitude nor re-establish their tranquillity . . . and upon a supposition that we were to be terrified into any concession they would make fresh demands. . . . Fatal experience, sir, has sufficiently proved the truth of this conjecture. We repealed the Stamp Act to comply with their desires . . . and that very lenity has encouraged them to insult our authority. . . . Shall we . . . resign the controuling supremacy of England? God forbid! The properest time to exert our right of taxation is when the right is refused. The properest time for making resistance is when we are attacked.’¹

North had to reconstruct his Cabinet before the year was out. When Weymouth resigned in December, Sandwich became the third Secretary of State with Rochford and Hillsborough. Next year, 1771, Hawke resigned the Admiralty and

¹ *Parliamentary History.*

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Sandwich took his place. Halifax succeeded him, and the Privy Seal was given to Suffolk, who came in as a representative of the Grenville Whigs ; for Grenville had died in the previous November and his connection was broken up. Now it was that Wedderburn found his excuse for going over to the Government as Solicitor-General. Halifax died. Suffolk became Secretary of State ; and Grafton, forswearing, like Suffolk, his recent profession of political allegiance, became Privy Seal. The Great Seal, which had been in commission, was given to Bathurst. Thurlow succeeded de Grey as Attorney-General.

The three years 1770–73 were not disturbed by tumults in America : there was a lull before the coming storm. But at home Wilkes and his friends supplied any deficiency there might otherwise have been in matters of public interest. There was plenty to keep North busy. Upon the whole he escaped without much molestation from the lash that Junius was plying right and left, but Wilkes was indirectly the cause of bringing one sharp flick in his direction. Luttrell, the usurper of the Middlesex seat, had been appointed Adjutant-General in Ireland, and Junius wanted to know the reason why. He promised to come back to North presently ; but there were others, such as Grafton and Mansfield, that he hated far worse than he hated North ; and with all his natural venom, he had not sufficient overplus to waste more than an occasional curse upon the Prime Minister.

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We cannot pass on without a word about Junius. His identity with Francis is so far admitted now that we need not attempt to reopen the question : but attention must be called to one extraordinary fact. No such letters have been produced before or since : seldom, if ever, have such perplexity and controversy been created. Whatever may be the defects of these productions they must be deemed powerful and ingenious in the highest degree : and yet there was hardly a man of any note who was not considered capable of having written them. Burke ; Shelburne ; Temple ; Germain ; Single-speech Hamilton ; Chatham ; Barré ; Grenville's Secretary, Lloyd ; Charles Lee, the American ; these and many more were credited with the literary force that was scattering dismay amongst public men. There are living now practised critics who are prepared to hold a brief for Chatham. In 1837 a long pamphlet was written to prove his authorship ; and the assertion of Junius that he did not know Grenville, is there accounted for by the subtle interpretation that for the moment Chatham and Grenville were not on speaking terms. So the puzzle may be twisted about for ever. Lord Brougham thought so badly of Junius that he declared that it was a libel on the memory of Francis to make him responsible for the letters.¹ Lord Shelburne might have cleared away the mystery :

‘ I knew Junius,’ he said, ‘ and I knew all about

¹ *Historical Sketches*, i. 116.

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the writing and production of those letters. . . . If I live over the summer, which however I don't expect, I promise you a very interesting pamphlet about Junius. . . . I will set that question at rest for ever.'

And he added that nobody had ever yet named the real author.¹ One word would have sufficed; but that word was never spoken; and the Junius mystery must remain for all time a sporting ground for those who grow weary of studying the Tichborne trial and the claims of Bacon to be the writer of Shakespeare's plays. Meanwhile we may be content with Francis, if any one must be named.

During 1770-71 the King was put to a good deal of annoyance. The town was riotous and there was much public discontent. Lord Mayor Beckford, after presenting a petition at St. James's, violated all the proprieties, and amazed the Court, by adding a few words 'out of his own head.' No wonder King George expressed his 'expectation that the Lord Mayor's unexpected speech be not looked upon as a precedent.' In more domestic matters he was confronted with a scandal. Lord Grosvenor brought an action for divorce against his wife, claiming 100,000*l.* damages from the Duke of Cumberland. The King wrote to Lord North in dismay: if nothing was done, Lord Grosvenor would press the matter in the House, 'which would at this licentious time occasion dis-

¹ Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, ii. 434.

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agreeable reflections on the rest of his family as well as his own.' Damages to the amount of 10,000*l.* were awarded. That North's labours to preserve his master's peace were not unappreciated is well attested. On June 7th, 1771, the King wrote :

'The sincere regard I have for you makes me, though much hurt at the certain loss of so amiable a man as Lord Halifax, yet with pleasure acquaint you that, whenever I receive the account of his death, I shall immediately appoint you Ranger of Bushey Bark. I cannot conclude without assuring you that every opportunity of shewing you the sincere regard I have for you is giving me the greatest pleasure.'

North had not long to wait before he stepped into the dead man's shoes, and Bushey for years to come was to be to him a haven of rest and a source of pleasure.¹ Bushey was then a great deal more a country-house than it appears to us, and it may be from here, though more probably from Dillington, that he wrote in an undated letter to Dartmouth :

'My dear Lord,—Before the messenger goes I think it right to inform you I can let you have half a Buck or even a whole Buck, if you choose it. I can send you some banging carp and some leverets. . . .'

It is surely manifest that North was taking his own risks and had no other master than the King. Yet the irrepressible legend of Bute's secret influence was passed about, and the Minister was

¹ The appointment was made in the name of Lady North.

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dubbed Lord Deputy North—presumably an allusion to the office of Lord Keeper (Lord Chancellor) held by his ancestor, Francis. As a matter of fact Bute was in Italy;¹ and not long before, North had written of him (October 21st, 1769):

‘Lord Bute is extremely ill again. He has totally lost his stomach. . . . Though he has been the cause of many, and the pretence of more, of our late disputes, yet I dare say it will be found that his death, if it should happen, will not produce any alteration in the system of Government, or be attended with any political consequence whatsoever. I am far from saying that systems will henceforth be immutable or ministries fixed and immovable, but whatever changes may happen in either, they will for the future arise from causes entirely independent of the sickness or health, life or death, inclinations or aversions of that noble person or his party.’

In his Budget speeches North showed himself a lover of peace and economy. It was on account of domestic turmoils that he professed most uneasiness. In 1771 he told the House that trade flourished in all parts of the kingdom: that the American disputes were settled—which was a rash assertion—and that there was nothing to disturb the peace and prosperity of the nation but ‘the discontents which a desperate faction is fermenting.’ Next year he was intent again on paying off debt. What was the best way of doing this? He confessed that his former plans had not answered his expectations. He now proposed to pay off

¹ Stanhope, v. 387.

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various 3 per cent. stocks at 90, with a bonus of four lottery tickets. Lottery tickets, he quaintly argued, might be bad things; but after all, they were quite as likely to lose as to win: consequently they ought not to encourage a sanguine spirit of gambling:

‘It is not only an armed force,’ he said, ‘not only a great army and a great naval force that will deter our rivals from violence, but the capacity for raising these bulwarks when occasion calls. . . . Such is the plan of finance which ought, in my opinion, to be adopted by a great minister, who has not so much to dread from foreign enemies as from domestic foes; from the violence of faction and the clamour of discontent.’

On this occasion he was not to be treated as a supremely gifted finance minister whose budgets need not be criticised, and he had to submit to a long and searching examination and listen to some sharp denials of the soundness of his methods.¹

North meanwhile was consistently acting the part of the staunch supporter of Church and State. On February 6th, 1772, Sir William Meredith had brought before Parliament the petition of the Protestant Dissenters for relief from subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. The opening sentences of North’s speech reveal a parliamentary subtlety that does not seem to accord with perfect candour, and lacks the emphatic decision of his closing words:

‘When I came down to the House it was my

¹ *Parliamentary History.*

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intention to concur with other gentlemen in bringing the petition up to your table. But this step I meant to take merely as matter of compliment and without entertaining the most distant idea of taking it into serious consideration. I should have afterwards proposed to adjourn the discussion for six months or, in other words, civilly but effectually dismissed it. This plan I have dropped in consequence of an argument advanced on the other side of the House. . . . Now, where is the necessity of altering at this juncture any part of our religious system? . . . Check, then, such a mad project in the bud and give not the least countenance to the petition.'

On February 27th, 1773, Sir William repeated his endeavour and drew from North another speech. This time we find a flavour of disingenuousness in the conclusion :

'We are told, Sir, of reformation. The reforming notions of this age are dangerous in their tendency: something more than reformation is intended: something that deserves a harsher appellation, and to which if we give way, adieu to religion; adieu to everything dear to us as men and as Christians. Sir, I am against the motion because subscription enjoins no hardship . . . because the sense in which they subscribe by no means implies their assent to the propositions . . . because relaxations of this kind would increase that dissoluteness of religious principle which so much prevails.'

On May 5th, 1774, the scene was acted over again and North made the same kind of speech with variations.

On February 17th, 1772, Mr. Henry Seymour

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introduced a measure to 'quiet the possessions of the subjects against dormant claims of the Church.' North spoke; but the *Parliamentary History* does not tell us what he said. He was clearly on the side of the bishops, but something in his speech or manner moved Mr. Seymour to an angry retort. He did not understand the ministerial countenance, he said; in future he should know when he apparently approved, he meant to oppose. Of North's rejoinder we are told:

'This was giving Lord North an opportunity that he made the most of. Among other things he observed that it was the etiquette of the minister, if he could not grant the favour asked of him, at least to send home the person refused in good humour. This was very well understood by courtiers; but for such ignorant honest country gentlemen as the hon. member he thought it right to explain that when he only nodded, or squeezed the hand, or did not absolutely promise, that he always meant No: which produced a great and long laugh.'¹

This confession has been quoted to show that, whatever disappointed applicants might say, North, like Doctor Johnson, flattered himself that he was a 'polite man.'

On April 3rd, 1772, Sir Henry Hoghton proposed a measure for the relief of Protestant Dissenters. The House of Commons passed it in confident assurance that it would be thrown out by the Lords²—a faith which the Bishops and the

¹ *Parliamentary History*. ² Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, i. 441.

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King's friends combined to justify. Of North we are told that 'his openly expressed concurrence with the views of the Nonconformists his Majesty quietly ignored.'¹ 'Mr. Onslow . . . sent to acquaint them [the Presbyterian clergy] of the concurrence of Lord North, Lord Mansfield, and a warm support from Elliot, Dyson, &c.' So Shelburne told Chatham.² The King was not for toleration; and it is not easy to believe that it appealed to the heart of North. In any case he made no attempt to stand up against his master. In the debate he took no part. Sir Henry Hoghton brought in another bill next year (1773); and although the debates extended from February 17th to March 25th, North remained persistently silent. The friends of the bill appear to have believed that he acted under compulsion; one declared that 'the minister was but the servant of a junto that really governed.' And the Rev. W. Mason wrote to Mr. Foljambe on May 9th, 1772, 'Lord North keeps his post, and, I believe, would be a good minister if he were really minister. The Rockingham party is more insignificant than ever.'³

In 1772 North had the happiness of bringing his friend Dartmouth into the Cabinet as Secretary of State, in charge of the Colonial Office. Why Hillsborough resigned is not quite clear. North wrote to his father rejoicing in the advent of Dartmouth, but lamenting Hillsborough's loss :

¹ *Early Life of Fox*, 476.

² Fitzmaurice : *Shelburne*, i. 440.

³ Hist. MSS. Com., Foljambe Papers.

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‘He certainly left us unwillingly, though at his own request. He was not prompted to his resignation either by love of faction or repose, but purely by notions of necessity he was under of resigning, which I own I could never see.’

He hopes he may recapture him before long—an ambition, we gather, that would not have animated anybody else.

Besides the gaining of his old friend, further satisfaction awaited North in his selection for the Garter. In the previous year the King had told him that

‘the next vacancy, whether of a subject or a foreign prince, I mean to bequeath this order on you, which I shall do with the greatest pleasure as I never have had any intimation from you that it is an honour you are in the least ambitious of.’

Ambitious or not, North took proper pride in his order and thenceforward was seldom spoken of otherwise than as the noble lord in the blue ribbon. Until a very recent date only four men had been Knights of the Garter in the House of Commons; and when it is remembered that the other three were Walpole, Castlereagh, and Palmerston, it must be admitted that North may be seen moving in good company. Horace Walpole tells us that this appointment was all the more flattering, since the King made it on a vacancy caused by the death of the Duke of Gotha; ‘it was a singular honour in this age’: moreover it was

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unusual to make a single investiture, instead of waiting until there were two vacancies. The new knight, we are told, recognised the obligations of charity that attended him. Every Sunday now at Downing Street he distributed broken victuals to the poor, and even bestowed 5*s.* 3*d.* on a favoured score. At the same time he celebrated his investiture by giving an entertainment 'of such splendour that London talked of it for a fortnight.'

Not to have asked for this decoration appears to have been, in the eyes of the King, a singular act of self-denial. In fact, it must have been attributed to eccentricity, and might even have been regarded as a breach of etiquette; for in a subsequent letter the King takes other ground: 'I am clear that the D. of Argyle ought to have this Ribband, and I will see if I cannot get him to ask for it': (April 21st, 1775). Not, as human nature goes, a difficult favour to elicit, one would think.

So North received his Garter with every token and condition of honour; but it is only right to add that in later and in evil days, M. Castries asked of the Duchess of Gloucester. '*Pourquoi l'a-t-il, lui? Est-ce pour avoir perdu l'Amérique?*'

CHAPTER X

CHARLES JAMES FOX

NORTH was indeed Prime Minister. His parliamentary reputation was assured, and he had an ample majority to support him. He had no difficulty in filling the Cabinet offices : since Grenville's death valuable recruits had come from the Whig connections. He stood high in the favour of his Sovereign. He was not yet involved in the American war. The civil disturbances should not have crushed his spirit. Yet we find him already writing this timid letter to his father on May 16th, 1772 :

‘ My Lord,—I ought a long time ago to have returned my thanks for your most kind and affectionate letter, and to have paid your congratulations in kind ; but your letter found me in the distress and agitation of an approaching Budget, and in a state of mind which made me consider my situation and my office with less comfort, if possible, than I do at other times. If I have once in my life been so happy as to be able to serve my King and my country from the accidental situation in which I stood, it must always be my wish to be released from a station which is too great for my abilities before I have entirely forfeited the little reputation I may have gained, and done

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more mischief to the Public by my want of knowledge, activity, and talents, than I did good to it by preventing the whole frame of administration from falling to pieces in a moment of trouble and danger. These reflexions, which are almost always uppermost in my thoughts, are certainly most troublesome and uneasy to me in hours of perplexity such as those were in which I received your letter. I have since been deliver'd of my Budget, and having now more leisure and ease of mind, I cannot employ myself better than in acknowledging the repeated marks of your Lordship's goodness and affection towards me.

I am, my Lord, your most dutiful son,

NORTH.'

For this obvious distress of mind one cause can at once be assigned. North had for a colleague in the subordinate post of Junior Lord of the Admiralty, a youth of twenty-three, Charles James Fox. He had been given office when he was barely of age, and he had already become impatient and unruly. If he can be said to have had any political principles he was a Tory of the narrowest sect, and knew not the language of Liberty. He was as stout an opponent and oppressor of Wilkes as the King himself. He objected to such measures as the disfranchisement of Shoreham for corruption, and the perpetuation of Grenville's Election Act. He would give the clergy no licence in respect of the Thirty-nine Articles. When, in February 1772, a member of Parliament introduced a Bill to protect the owners of Church lands from dormant claims, North op-

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posed it—to oblige the Bishops, it was said,¹—Fox made a violent attack on his chief and divided the House against him. Three days later he resigned.

‘ If it had been a Secretary of State—with half-a-dozen cousins in the House of Lords and a score of clients in the Commons—threatening to take himself and his connection into the camp of the enemy, the Prime Minister could not have been more perturbed than at the desertion of a Junior Lord whose property was a great deal less than nothing, and whose party consisted of a brother and a couple of schoolfellows ’ :

So says Sir George Trevelyan.

That Fox had abilities of the first order is beyond dispute. Lord Brougham describes him as

‘ one of the greatest statesmen, and if not the greatest orator, certainly the most accomplished debater that ever appeared upon the theatre of public affairs in any age of the world. ’

His statesmanship may be challenged at once. His debating powers cannot be disputed. Pitt, who was not an emotional man, and who certainly never loved Fox, admitted that to listen to him was to be under the wand of the charmer.² Yet he was not a graceful speaker: his gestures were ungainly, and he would be so much excited by his own eloquence that his voice would be raised to a discordant scream. There can be no doubt, however, that he was a very great House of Commons man.

¹ *Early Life*, by Sir George Trevelyan, 481.

² Fitzmaurice: *Shelburne*, ii. 24.

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Apart from this it is difficult indeed for anybody who has not been reared in Whig traditions, nor brought to maturity in the atmosphere of Brooks's Club, to understand the reverent adulation which is still lavished on Fox's memory. With the elect disciples this is little short of idolatry: with many it is a pious and sincere devotion. The club-house in St. James's Street is decorated with his portraits, even as oriental lands are bestrewn with images of Buddha. The volume in which his signature is appended to wagers on every conceivable subject, and approached in number only by the enterprising Captain Hanger, is preserved as something semi-sacred. The card-room is his temple; the table at which he played is his shrine. He is sanctified there mainly on account of his darling vice—gambling. Of his meritorious qualities there is no visible or tangible record. We must accept it as a fact that he was a charming companion: and this, indeed, nobody would be bold enough to deny. He had a genuine love of letters and a close familiarity with the classics; and he had the courage of his opinions. George III. has been condemned for saying that Shakespeare was sad stuff. Fox was not afraid of declaring that *Hamlet* contained more of Shakespeare's faults than any other of his plays.¹

He affected an indifference to reading. 'Ah, Mr. Fox, how delightful it must be to loll in the sun at your ease with a book in your hand,' said

¹ *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, i. 166.

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somebody. ‘Why the book, why the book?’ cried Fox.¹ Unpunctuality and indolence were partly innate habit; partly pose. At one time he was engaged with others in producing the *Englishman* newspaper. It was announced as a Saturday publication, but it was seldom ready before Tuesday. Then O’Byrne undertook to produce it punctually and did so. It failed: and Fox exclaimed, ‘Ay, ay: I knew what would come of it: our damned punctuality would be the ruin of it.’² He described himself as a bad hater: he was the best of company with men, and was not without attraction for women. All this was spontaneous: he was no popularity-hunter in private life. He could be as rude as Dr. Johnson; and he did not suffer fools gladly. To justify this assertion we call upon Wraxall:

‘Hare himself, who was one of his most favoured associates, vainly exerted every effort to make him say a few civil words to a Lady of Quality, the late Mrs. Hobart, afterwards Albinia, Countess of Buckinghamshire, by whom he was seated at supper in a great public company, met at Mrs. Crewe’s, expressly to celebrate the success of the Election: a success to which that lady, as he knew, had contributed by every means in her power; and who, as her reward, only aspired to attract his notice or attention for a few minutes. He turned his back on her and would not utter a syllable. Hurt at Fox’s neglect, Hare . . . took out a pencil, wrote three lines and pushed the paper across the table to his friend . . . they

¹ Lord Broughton’s *Recollections of a Long Life*, i. 203.

² *Ibid.* 204.

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adjured Fox to turn himself round towards the Lady in question. He calmly perused the billet, and then having torn it in small pieces, which he placed on the table . . . turned his back, if possible, still more decidedly on the Person in whose behalf the expostulation was written. These facts were related to me by a Nobleman, a friend of Fox, who was present on the occasion.’¹

Wraxall goes on to say that at one election Horace Walpole, old and ill, was carried to the poll to vote for Fox: ‘No remonstrance could prevail on Fox to leave his name at Mr. Walpole’s door, though he passed it continually in his morning walks.’ He had not the nature that cannot say or do a harsh thing: one of his last acts was to vote against the bestowal of public honours on his dead opponent, Pitt.

And his fascination did not always extend beyond his native circle. Madame Necker, so Gibbon says, found him cold and cynical. M. de Vergennes did not fall under the spell: ‘C’est un fagot d’épines que ce M. Fox,’ was his verdict. A clever woman and capable observer, Madame Du Deffand, saw much of him in Paris, and wrote her opinions without reserve to Horace Walpole. Here are some of them:

‘Son esprit me paraît médiocre, et son caractère détestable’ (January 9th, 1770). ‘Je regarde comme un très grand malheur d’avoir un compatriote du caractère de Charles Fox; je n’aime point sa sorte d’esprit et j’ai bien mauvaise opinion

¹ Wraxall, iii. 251 (1781).

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de son caractère' (February 26th, 1772). 'Charles Fox est un fol, sans mœurs, sans morale, et maintenant sans un sol; je ne le plains point parce qu'il se glorifie de ses vices et de ses folies' (March 5th, 1774).

The best she can say of him is that in spite of his mania for gambling, which fills her with horror,

'... il joint à beaucoup d'esprit, de la bonté, de la vérité, mais cela n'empêche pas qu'il soit détestable, sans principes...' (January 22nd, 1777).

This passion for play shocked her. To her mind it was hardly compatible with the character of 'parfaitement honnêtes gens' (*ibid.*). She would have no high play in her house at all events (December 24th, 1769). 'Ah! je suis bien résolue d'être sur mes gardes avec ces oiseaux' (December 26th, 1769)—by which she meant birds of passage in Paris; not pigeons to be plucked. 'C'est le petit Fox dont la déroute en a entraîné plusieurs autres' (January 12th, 1770) signifies a run of bad luck in Charles's early Paris days.

At this time Madame Du Deffand had formed a disparaging opinion of his abilities and prospects:

'Je lui trouve beaucoup d'esprit, mais il a pris toute sa croissance, il n'ira pas plus loin; il pourra augmenter de témérité, quoiqu'il en ait déjà une bonne dose. Voilà le seul progrès qu'il pourra faire' (December 13th, 1769). And, 'Le Fox... toute réflexion faite, me plaît médiocrement; il a

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de l'esprit, mais c'est un esprit précoce, il ne mûrira jamais, il est sans goût, sans saveur, il est âpre et vert ; son imagination, son feu, le mèneront loin, mais il croit trouver tout en lui et il négligera toujours l'instruction et l'étude dont il n'aura pas besoin pour la circonstance du moment. . . . Il y a du Jean Jacques . . . ' (December 20th, 1769).

Englishmen, however, thought otherwise, and it was not only amongst the revellers of Almack's and the ardent politicians of Brooks's that he found his worshippers. Gibbon was a staid man and nominally a political opponent ; yet in 1788 the conviction that he held about Fox was that ' perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood.' That he should have fascinated his contemporaries can be understood. Many bad men are made more dangerous by the endowment of inscrutable charm ; and Fox no doubt had the rare and mischievous faculty of disguising even his vices in a semblance of merit, and sinning in such a way that nobody could find it in his heart to utter censure or contempt. But it is strange, indeed, that he should be canonised as a patriot, a noble-hearted citizen, and a model of the virtues, now that the spell of his presence is removed, and we can judge him in the dispassionate record of history.

His private life was disgraceful. Unhappily for him, his father, in futile imitation of Lord Chesterfield, sought to make young Charles a consummate man of the world, and succeeded in

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corrupting his morals and exciting an inexhaustible passion for play. The father idolised him, and was slow to resent his excesses ; but Henry Fox, with his love of wealth and his ambitious projects, cannot have seen his fortune melting away without a pang. Charles was in fact a bad son. Sir George Trevelyan in proof of his excellence of heart prints a letter written to Lady Holland in the winter of 1773-74. It is contrite enough, certainly, but there is a whining tone about it that is not to be admired ; and it is a frank admission of conscious and deliberate misdoing :

‘ . . . to be loved by you and him has always been (indeed I am no Hypocrite, whatever I may be) the first desire of my life. The reflection that I have behaved in many respects ill to you is almost the only painful one I have ever experienced. That my extreme imprudence and dissipation has given both of you uneasiness is what I have long known, and . . . that thought has embittered my life. I own I lately began to flatter myself that, particularly with you, and in a great degree with my father, I had regained that sort of confidence which was once the greatest pride of my life . . . ’

and so on, with copious promises of amendment and professions of duty, respect, gratitude, and love ; with prayers for a renewal of favour, which is to make him the happiest of men. Well might poor Lady Holland have reminded him that to ‘ obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams.’ On July 1st, 1774, Lord Holland died, and within a month the mother

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followed him : there was no time for Charles to undo the mischief he had done, even had he been intent on it.

Much as men were drawn to him, he was in fact a dangerous friend. He appropriated and squandered their money, and laid burdens upon them, with no more scruple than he observed in plundering his father. ' Lord Carlisle pays fifteen hundred and Mr. Crewe twelve hundred a year for him,' says Walpole. Carlisle was left stranded in a country house which ' he could not afford to leave on account of the pecuniary distress, in which the improvidence of his comrade had involved him.'¹ Finally, for the sake of his wife and children he was forced to appeal to Lord Holland. It is surely no excuse for Fox that Lord Carlisle was so devoted and so good-natured that he did not mind. In 1793 Charles allowed his friends to subscribe 70,000*l.* to buy him an annuity.

We have already had it on Lord John Russell's authority that Fox's friendship, if such it were, brought nothing but evil to the Prince of Wales. The only good thing that can be said about his private life is that he was loyal to the woman who had been his mistress. He had no exalted sentiment about marriage and married life. He showed his gratitude to Carlisle by being ' stern in his reprobation of the matrimonial contentment at Castle Howard'²—a contentment which

¹ *Early Life*, 519.

² *Ibid.* 558.

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he, indeed, had done little to promote. He did not scruple to advise the Prince of Wales to avoid marriage with Mrs. FitzHerbert, and make her his mistress instead.¹ The Prince lied to him treacherously over the transaction; but Fox swallowed the insult, and clung to the Prince in the hope of political profit.

Fox did, indeed, marry his own mistress, Mrs. Armitstead, but he told nobody for six years :

‘ Even now he seems to have been ashamed to avow to his friends and to the world that he was able to call an affectionate and faithful woman his wife ’ ;

so Lord John Russell says of this. It is on record that the lady was never asked to Holkham, where Fox was an habitual visitor. Mr. Coke drew the line here, even in the case of his beloved Fox ; and it may be that she remained so long unavowed because she was likely to prove a social encumbrance. She appears to have been an excellent woman, and their home life affords the pleasantest scene in which Fox is to be found.

The worst and most damaging charge that has to be made against Fox is his ostentatious adoption of the cause of his country’s enemies.

‘ When . . . our country was in danger, Fox took his place amongst the foremost—nay it may be said, as the foremost of Britain’s defenders . . . He succeeded in reconciling . . . his fidelity to a political creed with the duty which he owed to his country.’

¹ *Life*, by Lord J. Russell, ii. 182.

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So says Sir George Trevelyan. Let us see how this success was obtained.

We have seen that Fox set out as a stalwart upholder of the principles dear to the Court and the Court party. In February 1774 he left office for the second time; dismissed now, and not to be taken back. He did not at once swear allegiance to any Opposition leader,¹ but it was well known that he meant to do some opposing on his own account. Walpole told Mann that North, 'with his usual hurry after indolence,' had turned out Fox, 'for great flippancies to the King and himself. . . . His parts will now have a full opportunity of showing whether they can balance his character or whether patriotism can whitewash it.' We will look for the kind of language in which he proclaimed his patriotism.

When he heard of Howe's victory at Long Island in 1776, he wrote to Rockingham (October 13th):

'though I am far from being dismayed by the terrible news from Long Island . . . I hope that it will be a point of honour among us all to support the American pretensions in adversity as much as we did in prosperity. . . .'

As the war went on he took occasion to declare in Parliament that the cause of the American prisoners at Plymouth was the cause of Whiggism and of the Constitution, to which he ardently wished success. Dundas answered that he felt

¹ Lecky, iv. 331.

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no surprise at his rejoicing at the enemy's success, to which he had contributed not a little by his language and action within those walls: and Mansfield, the Solicitor-General, asked whether he meant to 'draw the sword, wear the rebel uniform, and point his weapon against his countrymen's breasts.' Fox was content to wear the rebel uniform, if we may believe that blue and buff became the Whig colours in imitation of such uniform as the American army was able to display. As long as Burgoyne was in the field Fox corresponded with him in cipher. Burgoyne was an honest soldier and lies under no suspicion of treason; but for an officer on active service to communicate secretly with a leader of Opposition is not at first sight consistent with entire devotion to the Government by whom he is employed. And when Burgoyne came home he had no scruples in adopting his friend's politics. In Parliament he attacked the Government as briskly as he ever attacked the enemy in the field, and reviled his own country whose uniform he had worn and whose pay he had taken.

'If America should be at our feet—which God forbid!' was the pious exclamation of Fox, and he strove to prevent the consummation by doing his best to embarrass Ministers and prevent them from repairing their losses whenever bad news came, as it very frequently did, from the seat of war. And we may here observe that it was not in him to refrain from attacking the Government at

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a moment of national danger. In later years, when Ministers had to deal with a most formidable peril in the Mutiny at the Nore (1797), Fox deliberately moved the rejection of the Treason and Sedition Bills and used these arguments :

‘If Ministers . . . by means of corrupt influence passed these bills in violent opposition to the declared sense of a great majority of the nation, then . . . obedience . . . was no longer a question of moral obligation and duty, but of prudence.’

No wonder he was accused of inciting to rebellion.

Indeed, this habit became more and more confirmed as he grew older. When the French Revolution burst forth, and our wars with France followed, there was no more ardent Frenchman than Fox. His conduct can only be explained upon two suppositions: one, that he was made savage and reckless by long exclusion from office and by consciousness of political failure; the other, that he gradually became the slave of pose and affectation. Never was the word Liberty, much abused as it has been, more absurdly abused than it was by him. ‘How much the greatest event it is that has happened in the world and how much the best,’ he wrote when he heard of the capture of the Bastille; which is ranting nonsense fit only for a pot-house demagogue. ‘No public event,’ he wrote, when he heard of the French victory at Valmy in 1792, ‘not excepting Saratoga and Yorktown, ever happened that gave me so much

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delight.' And so he went on rejoicing in all the evils that his country had to endure. In the case of Trafalgar he relented so far as to admit the benefits of victory, and only regretted them because they would fortify his political opponents. To Lord Holland he wrote :

‘ It is a great event, and by its solid as well as brilliant advantages far more than compensates for the temporary relief which it will certainly afford to Pitt in his distress. I am very sorry for poor Nelson, and though his conduct at Naples was atrocious, I believe he was at bottom a good man.’

He did attend Nelson’s funeral. Afterwards somebody said that it had been an impressive ceremony : ‘ Yes,’ was Fox’s characteristic answer, ‘ but it is better to be alive.’¹ To sum up : his state of mind can best be inferred from this passage in a letter to Charles Grey of October 22nd, 1801 :

‘ The truth is I am gone something further in hate to the English Government than you and the rest of my friends are, and certainly further than can with prudence be allowed. The triumph of the French Government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise.’

Let us give Fox credit where credit is due. He was sound on the retention of Gibraltar, which cannot be said of a good many better men ; and he was not wholly incapable of supporting the interests of his country. When the exploits of Spain in

¹ *Recollections of a Long Life*, Lord Broughton, vi. 6.

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Nootka Sound threatened war in 1789, he did vote with Pitt in favour of an immediate increase of the Navy ; and there came a time in the French war when, without ceasing to clamour for peace, he did cease to proclaim his preference for the French cause. Sir Walter Scott, intent on dealing leniently with the dead, wrote of him

‘ And, partial feeling cast aside,
Record that Fox a Briton died.’

The admirers of Fox, with more loyalty than reason, resented this on the ground that it implied that he had not always been a faithful and patriotic Briton.

‘ Never was there a man whose faults were so largely those of his time, whilst his eminent merits and enormous services to his country were so peculiarly his own,’

says Sir George Trevelyan. We shall find some difficulty in discovering what were the enormous services that he rendered to his country. His faults were manifold and conspicuous enough. This is the character given him by a well-disposed critic, Lord Morley : ‘ He was dissolute, indolent, irregular, and the most insensate gambler that ever squandered fortune after fortune over the faro table.’¹ He adds that George III. hated him for his vices as much as for his politics.

Fox was in truth a loose liver. He had plenty of affairs with women before he settled down with Mrs. Armitstead : he was a heavy drinker. But

¹ *Burke*, 119.

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his intrigues were not amongst the most scandalous in history, and he was not a drunkard like Sheridan. It was gambling, the most selfish of all vices, that was his besetting sin. In this indulgence he knew no self-control ; and whether he ruined himself, his father, his brother, or his friends, was all one to him. Here is his record for a few days in the month of February 1772. He played from Tuesday evening until five on Wednesday evening : he lost 11,000*l.* after winning 12,000*l.* On Thursday he spoke in the debate upon relieving undergraduates from the obligation of signing the Thirty-nine Articles, and solemnly informed the House that religion was best understood when least talked of. After this he dined at 11.30 p.m., and drank at White's till 7 a.m. Thence to Almack's, where he was not too late to win 600*l.* ; and in the afternoon he proceeded to Newmarket for a little racing. No wonder his father, hearing a report that he was to be married, said, ' I am glad of that, for he will go to bed at least one night.' He was found to have lost 140,000*l.* in three years : in fact his fortune was so excessively bad that there was a suspicion that he was habitually cheated. They were heavy gambling days. At Almack's players began with a number of rouleaux of 50*l.* apiece, and there would be as much as 10,000*l.* on the table. Strange figures they must have been. Some turned their coats for luck. Most of them wore frieze garments and leather aprons to save their finery from damage. They wore high straw hats

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with broad brims, decorated with flowers and ribbons, to protect their eyes from the glare. Some wore masks, probably to protect their faces from scrutiny. And tea-trays were at hand to hold their beverage and superfluous property.

Fox had been a dandy in his youth; but the character was not congenial, and he abjured it with great thoroughness. 'He washed his face (a process which there is reason to believe was too often the limit of his ablutions),' says Sir George Trevelyan. And here is Walpole's account of the morning levée, which was often graced by the Prince of Wales :

' . . . as soon as he rose, which was very late, . . . his bristly black person and shaggy breast quite open, and rarely purified by any ablutions, was wrapped in a foul linen night-gown, and his bushy hair dishevelled.'

His home must have rested on the insecurest of foundations during these years of activity. When he left office in 1782 he took refuge in his old quarters. His facetious friend Hare, who lived upstairs, said he had not made a temporary move because he had no wish to rise on the occasion of his friend's fall; and he went on to congratulate him on his return from the service of the King of England to the service of the King of Egypt. Faro, indeed—or whatever the game might be—left Fox's household gods naked to his enemies at all times, and the hearth was seldom safe from invasion by bailiffs and duns. Yet it

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was Fox who gravely assured the House during the discussion of North's loan of 1781 that he was on principle opposed to the Lottery scheme, and was in favour of suppressing gaming-houses, because they were 'pernicious and destructive . . . as immediately affecting the morals, habits, and circumstances of the lower orders of the people.'¹

Fox had undoubtedly a full vein of good nature and he may well have regarded the 'lower order of the people' with an easy benevolence: but his traditions and habits were purely aristocratic, and nobody has ever pretended that he was an ardent philanthropist. He talked the cant of Liberty, and in 1798 at a public dinner he was not ashamed to propose the toast of 'our Sovereign, the People.' In 1780, when troops were held in readiness to check any disturbance that might arise out of the meeting of the Corresponding Committee in Palace Yard, he proclaimed the doctrine that if soldiers were thus let loose on the constitutional assemblages of the people, all who attended them must go armed—which was a reckless piece of opportunism on the part of a man who was eagerly striving to become responsible for the good government of his country. Next year he fell in with the current pretension of the enemies of Government and proclaimed that he sat in Parliament as much in his delegated capacity, to watch over the conduct of representatives, as in the character of representative only. Burke

¹ *Life*, by Lord John Russell, i. 240.

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spoke of Fox's 'darling popularity,' and these exhibitions were no doubt intended only to secure the object of his desire. One seldom reads of act or word that suggests a true and instinctive tenderness for democracy. The French Revolution, indeed, he loved much as he loved the electors of Westminster — as material for the manufacture of popular heroes ; and it is on record that when he went in Paris to gaze upon Napoleon, and beheld him arrayed, for the first time, in the green and gold apparel of royalty, he threw up his hands and turned away in disgust.¹ On this occasion he had no audience to act to, and his indignation was probably genuine. Whether this shows that he was by instinct an anti-monarchy man, or that he feared the revolution pose was going to be discredited, we can decide as we please. The line that he had chosen led him logically enough into the camp of the reformers. In 1782 he voted in the minority in favour of Pitt's resolution. He went with Richmond and the stalwarts when Rockingham was shy and Burke vehemently hostile. Next year he voted for the first time against his new ally, North, in consistent support of Pitt : for it had been one of the conditions of the coalition that Reform should be an open question. In his unregenerate days he had urged the House of Commons to 'guard their rights and liberties . . . against the assaults of the commonalty, as their forefathers had guarded them

¹ *Memorials of a Long Life*, i. 129.

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against the encroachments of the sovereign.’¹ Now his Sovereign was the People; and his darling popularity had taught him to be careful for their rights and liberties; not anybody else’s.

Fox was certainly ambitious. We have seen that in 1778 he remonstrated with Rockingham for being too passive in opposition and for neglecting the chance of office that lay within reach.² At the same time he was writing in a contradictory tone to Fitzpatrick:

‘Great reputation I think I may acquire and keep: great situation I can never acquire nor, if acquired, keep without making sacrifices that I will never make.’

Lord Brougham, who admired Fox, as became a good Whig, was not quite prepared for this modest and pious profession. After setting forth the nobility of Fox’s Whig principles, he goes on,

‘yet he constantly modified these principles, according to his own situation and circumstances as party chief; making ambition of the man and the interest of his followers the governing rule of his conduct. The charge is a grave one: but unhappily the facts fully bear it out.’³

Yet Fox boldly averred, ‘I have never sacrificed my principles to popularity or ambition.’⁴ Wraxall says that in 1782 Fox singled out Thurlow for personal eulogy, because he censured the policy of his own colleagues. Next year, when Thurlow appeared as an obstacle to the formation of a

¹ *Early Life*, 416.

² *Rockingham Memoirs*, ii. 371.

³ *Historical Sketches*, i. 233.

⁴ *Life*, by Lord J. Russell, ii. 77.

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Coalition Government, Fox had ready for him a flood of rough invective.¹

Fox wanted to be in office. On February 21st, 1783, he told the House of Commons,

‘ I will confess that I am desirous of enjoying an eminence which must flatter my ambition, promote my convenience, and enable me to exert myself in my country’s service ; and in confessing this desire, I trust that it cannot be termed presumption ’ —

a most proper and honourable announcement ; but one not easy to reconcile with his letter to Fitzpatrick. W. S. Landor deals harshly with his spirit of accommodation :

‘ He never came into office but through a breach of honour ; never without a close and intimate coalition with men whom he had frequently and loudly and justly denounced as worthy of the gallows. ’²

Nobody can deny to Fox the merit of assiduity, interrupted and mitigated, as it may have been, by divers distractions. He spoke incessantly and acquired his dominating position without, like Burke, becoming a bore. He is said to have admitted that he had spoken during a certain period once or more every night, except one ; and that occasion of silence he had never ceased to regret. In this policy he did but imitate his father, who is reported to have said that he never repented having spoken, but often repented having kept silence.³ And it is curious to learn on Lord

¹ *Wraxall*, ii. 199.

² *Commentary on Fox*, 54.

³ *Recollections of a Long Life*, v. 179.

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Holland's authority that, in spite of this volubility, Charles never got rid of timidity in addressing the House.¹ For he was certainly no coward. When his fierce attack in 1779 on Adam, for transferring his party allegiance, was answered by a challenge, he went out to fight like a man ; stood two shots ; was hit ; and swore eternal friendship with his adversary.

Fox was in fact something of a turbulent soul. During the Keppel riots in 1778 he sallied forth with Lord Derby, and some other gallants, to take part in the destruction of property. And out of this arises an anecdote of North's good nature. A youth was to be tried on a capital charge in connection with the attack on Palliser's house. Fox bestirred himself on behalf of a fellow-rioter : and North obligingly ordered the issue of a writ of *nolle prosequi*.

There was also a touch of the weakling in Fox. A female adventurer, calling herself the Hon. Mrs. Grieve, spread her net for him, professing to tell his fortune, and actually augmenting her own, on the security of an heiress, who was shortly to recoup him amply for any temporary advances he might make in the meanwhile.² He was caught as easily as the most credulous of boobies.

It may be that some such mental obliquity was responsible for his insane carelessness about money. There are some people who treat money as the

¹ *Recollections of a Long Life*, vi. 112.

² *Last Journals*, i. 284.

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air they breathe: it is a necessity of life: they require an ample share: and they expect to have it as a matter of course, never considering how their neighbours are to be affected. A case in point arises out of Fox's dealing with his Irish sinecure. His conduct in this transaction has been ruthlessly handled in a recent volume,¹ where we read that Fox's 'devotion to the liberties of the Irish people took the form of a snug sinecure . . . he was eager to realise it for ready cash.' Fox's devotion to the liberties of the Irish was, to say the least, capricious. When he was Secretary of State in the Coalition of 1783, he wrote to Northington, the Viceroy, in language that our Nationalist party would naturally count on hearing from a modern Tory Chief Secretary.² When Pitt was in office two years later, Fox, who was out, wrote, 'I will make my harvest from Ireland,' and used Ireland 'simply as a weapon to thwart and embarrass Pitt and the British Government at home and abroad.'³ This was a repetition of his previous record. As Secretary of State under Rockingham in 1782 he had begun by being stiff with Ireland. Next year Temple, who was Lord-Lieutenant under Shelburne, wrote to the King to complain that 'the Duke of Portland and Mr. Fox . . . continue to keep up a constant correspondence with the popular leaders in the Kingdom' (March 23rd, 1783). Temple's attempt to lay a firm hand upon the

¹ *The End of the Irish Parliament*, by J. R. Fisher.

² *Op. cit.* 148.

³ *Ibid.* 173.

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unruly people committed to his care Fox denounced as 'wholly unnecessary.'¹

That Ireland should be called upon to pay the salary of a Clerk of the Pells to an English politician, who made no pretence of earning it, never shocked Fox's sense of liberty and justice for one moment. When Stephen Fox died in 1774 Charles succeeded to this sinecure appointment. He was ready to part with it at once; but satisfactory terms from the Government were not to be had. Next year some profitable post had to be found for Jenkinson, and on July 3rd the King wrote to North:

'As you are of opinion that the bargain is not unreasonably advantageous to Mr. Fox, I give my consent to finishing that affair and to naming Mr. Jenkinson to that office.'

In 1783 Dundas twitted Fox with having 'carried a patent place to market.' Fox replied in defence that he had inherited this office as part of his patrimony; that he sold it to Government at their request and got less for it than it was worth. Rigby, who knew all about jobs in general and this one in particular, confirmed the statement. Consequently it may be said that there was nothing specially discreditable in the transaction. Fox made no effort to relieve Ireland of a sinecure charge, and had no scruple in putting into his bottomless pocket what he could get out of it;

¹ *Buckingham Memoirs*, i. 237.

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but unless we expect of him an unselfish effort at economic reform, such as would have horrified his father, and could hardly have been intelligible to himself, we need not emphasize this aspersion on his virtue.

Let us see now what were the 'enormous services to his country' of which Sir George Trevelyan speaks. If the catalogue of these is meagre, Fox was not entirely to blame. A statesman of the first rank—and that is where his admirers would place him—must have the opportunities of office to establish a reputation. Walpole, Chatham, Pitt, Peel, Palmerston, Gladstone, are praised, when they are praised, for what they did in office; not for the negative achievements of opposition. After Fox resigned in 1774, he held office for something like twenty months in thirty-two years. In 1782 he was Secretary of State under Rockingham from March until July; a short period, but long enough to produce a record definitely bad. Fox lost no time in seeking, as all his professions bound him to seek, an immediate restoration of peace. His policy was to detach the Dutch from their alliance; he flattered himself he had the secret of success here; but his failure was immediate and complete:

‘his overtures were received by the States-General with coldness, if not with contempt. Meanwhile the Americans, whose moderation and magnanimity he had so often applauded from the Opposition benches, met his overtures for pacifica-

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tion with a coldness even greater than that of the States-General.'¹

Then he fell foul of Shelburne, the other Secretary of State, and the Paris negotiations became an ordeal of rivalry and intrigue. Fox's diplomacy was a miserable fiasco. 'He said he had a peace in his pocket, when he no more had a peace in it than a guinea.'²

Fox very soon blundered into a personal squabble. Rodney had been recalled, and not even the news of his victory over de Grasse, which made him a national hero, could alter this decree. In his place went Pigot, who was a good Whig and nothing much besides. Wraxall says that Fox was plainly charged with defending and insisting on the change because he owed Pigot money for card debts, and this appointment was to make them quits.³ One might be accused of wilful prejudice if one offered this as the true explanation. Fox may have been moved by nothing more than a desire to undo the work of Sandwich, and discredit the man whom Sandwich had selected. He had once accused Sandwich of being in French pay;⁴ and there had, in truth, been rumours that some of the late First Lord's nominations had been made in consideration of value received.⁴ Fox urged in justification of the Government he represented that the prerogative of the Crown was at stake; with the strange reservation that he

¹ *Pictorial History*, v. 484.

² W. S. Landor: *Commentary*, xxiii.

³ Wraxall, iii. 119.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 191.

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personally was an enemy to Crown influence. Meanwhile Rodney was given a peerage and a pension ; and was more or less disgraced ; and Pigot went out and spent six months in doing nothing.

In the House of Commons Fox cut something of a sorry figure. In April 1782 under Rockingham he sternly rebuked Eden, late Chief Secretary for Ireland, who moved to repeal the Declaratory Act (6 George I.), for the recklessness of his proposal. Next month he was constrained to move the repeal himself. Presently Wilkes triumphantly carried the motion to rescind all the entries against himself in the Journals of the House. Fox, who had been one of his foremost pursuers in old days, spoke in favour of the motion and voted against it, laying down the vague doctrine that Parliament had power to expel a member, but must never do so if public sentiment were adverse.

Before Rockingham died, Fox was already so far estranged from Shelburne and some others that he determined to resign ; and when the vacancy came and Shelburne succeeded, Fox went out, followed only by Cavendish and Burke, Portland, the Lord-Lieutenant, and one or two personal friends in minor offices. The fact that his other allies in the Cabinet were not prepared to share his fortunes is a slender tribute to his influence, and it undoubtedly disappointed and disgusted him. He had put out all his strength and had done little

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damage to any but himself—a reckless self-sacrifice to which history was to furnish a parallel case after an interval of a hundred and four years. So much for 1782. Fox was back again in April 1783, under a cloud of comment and suspicion that has always hung over his name. The coalition with North was not approved. All that he did on this occasion was to produce an India Bill, which was condemned with something like universal obloquy, and was the cause of the abrupt dismissal of the Government.

He was Secretary of State again in 1806, under Grenville, for eight months before his death. He made an effort, for which nobody need blame him, to bring Napoleon to terms ; but it was a hopeless attempt and it failed. He applied himself to the abolition of the slave trade, but he did not live to see it condemned by the passing of the Act of 1807. Allowing him full credit for this, he cannot be counted as much more than a belated disciple of Wilberforce. In his later years he consistently supported proposals in favour with the party to which he belonged—the removal of Dissenters' disabilities ; repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts ; Catholic Emancipation ; and he had been active in amending and improving the law of libel : but when all is said there remains a very meagre record of constructive statesmanship.

Even in Opposition his powers were displayed with limitations. Lord John Russell, writing of

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Pitt's success as a financial reformer between 1784 and 1793, says that during this period Fox

‘betrayed the deficiencies of a mind . . . not stored with the reasonings of economical writers, or directed by an enlarged view of the liberal policy of a mercantile people.’

He never read Adam Smith. Indeed, as a student of finance he can be compared once more with a more recent statesman of chequered fortune to whom allusion has been made.

Nor was Fox eminently fortunate in his intellectual pursuits. He once declared that ‘literature was in every point of view a preferable occupation to politics’; but when he betook himself to writing the Life of James II. he produced a work which lives no more happily in the memory of man than the unfortunate monarch himself. ‘Few compositions have more faults or greater,’ said Landor.¹

When we sum up Fox's achievements, then, we may say that they consist mainly in fighting with all his heart and with all his strength for the Americans throughout their war, and for the French, during the first ten years, at all events, of their conflict with England. And in the words of his disciple, Lord Brougham, ‘the interval between the American and the French wars was passed by Mr. Fox in opposing whatever was proposed by his antagonist.’

It is only fanciful to give judgment on a man's

¹ *Commentary on Fox*, 75.

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character by looking at his face or his portrait. These are no infallible guides. But Hazlitt thought proper to ascribe the shortcomings of Fox to the contour of his mouth and chin :

‘ Charles Fox had an animated intelligent eye, and brilliant elastic forehead (with a nose indicating fine taste), but the lower features were weak, unsettled, fluctuating, and without *purchase*—it was in them the Whigs were defeated.’¹

We must now describe the youthful antics that caused Lord North so much uneasiness.

In 1772 Fox was impelled to a great extent by private motives. His father, Henry Fox, had made a runaway marriage with the daughter of a duke, and society had been shocked. It was the lifelong aim of the father to establish his position so firmly that people should forget they had ever thought the alliance unseemly. Hence, in part at least, his restless pursuit of riches ; hence his desire for a peerage. He obtained a barony for his wife in 1762, and for himself in 1763. In 1767 he was prowling about for an earldom, and told Lord Chatham—to whom he stood in much the same relation as his son was afterwards to stand to Chatham’s son—that he would sooner owe that aim of his ambition to his lordship than any man alive.² Chatham was unresponsive ; and in 1772 Lord Holland was still casting about for some means of promotion. The King, we are told, was

¹ *Table Talk*—‘ On Thought and Action.’

² *Chatham Papers*, iii. 270.

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considerate enough to spare North the embarrassment of disappointing the father of his young colleague and sent the aspiring nobleman a direct refusal.¹

Charles Fox had not unnaturally grown up with generous views on the subject of brides and bridegrooms. He objected to the principle of restriction embodied in the Royal Marriages Bill; and in the early months of 1772 North was wrestling with this measure—of which we shall have occasion to speak presently. But Fox's views on matrimony carried him beyond this. He resigned; and whilst he was out of office he devoted himself to amending Lord Hardwicke's Act of 1753. This measure had been passed to place obstacles in the way of the secret or forced marriages, which were many and mischievous. Fox objected. He would let every man and woman wed when and where they chose and could, and take their chance of the consequences. Passion, not reason, was, in his judgment, best capable of promoting felicity in wedlock.² He gave notice of a measure to amend the law. The hour came and the man; but he came rather late. He arrived from Newmarket, where he had lost 1000*l.* : on the road he had stopped at Hockerel to sit up all night, drinking. The consequence was he had no bill ready to introduce.³ However, it was introduced somehow, and Fox greatly distinguished himself in

¹ *Early Life*, 316.

² *Wraxall*, ii. 417.

³ *Last Journals*, i. 85.

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the debate that followed. On April 19th the bill came on for decision; but Fox was back at Newmarket. Again he arrived in hot haste, and had the mournful satisfaction of voting in a minority of one to three. In 1781 he was still moving resolutions in vain. He promised that if he ever came into office, he would return to the charge with such added impetus as his position might then afford; but this purpose he failed to fulfil.

It is reasonable to believe, then, that it was upon the question of marriage that Fox was driven to rebellion and resignation. This is to be borne in mind; for he has been credited with a variety of motives. His resignation did not escape the nimble pen of Walpole, who repeated, or invented, a story of which neither Lord John Russell nor Sir George Trevelyan takes any notice. According to him, Lord Holland and Charles were bent on obtaining a vacant sinecure post for O'Brien, the actor, who had eloped with Lady Susan Fox-Strangways, their niece and cousin. This would be a man after their own hearts. He had practised what they preached, and it is not at all improbable that they would be willing to exert themselves on his behalf. But if Charles was at the moment prepared to sacrifice office in the cause, as is suggested, his interest appears to have waned with years. In 1783, when he was in office, O'Brien was still place-hunting, and Lady Sarah Napier writing to Lady Susan has to defend Fox from the

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imputation of 'cutting his old friends.'¹ To Lord Ossory, Fox wrote (February 21st, 1772):

'It is impossible to tell you the real reason of my resignation: it is very complicated. I should not have resigned at this moment merely on account of my complaints against Lord North, if I had not determined to vote against the Royal Family Bill, which, in place, I should be ashamed of doing.'

John Crawford wrote to the same gentleman: 'Charles . . . had not any one particular reason for this step; but upon the whole he thought Lord North did not treat him with the confidence and attention he used to do.'

Sir George Trevelyan adopts this view. Fox was not satisfied with tokens of appreciation that were offered him. He was a young man in a hurry, and he bolted. But he was to have flattering assurance of his own importance. Before the year was out North had created a vacancy for him on the Treasury Board which, if not high promotion, was a step above his place at the Admiralty. It seems that Lord Holland—O'Brien or no O'Brien—was all in favour of office and salary, and Charles was easily induced to return to the fold; proud in the consciousness that his manœuvre had induced the Government to amend the Royal Marriages Bill.

Not for long, however, was he to rest content in these green pastures. In February 1774 the House was at grips with Woodfall, the printer,

¹ *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, ii. 41.

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who had published in the *Public Advertiser* Horne's attack upon the Speaker. North was disposed to deal lightly with the culprit. Fox was for a policy of 'thorough,' and assumed the double functions of law officer and leader. In the words of Walpole, 'Fox, prompt to be violent and to disgust, and assuming the minister, moved to commit Woodfall to Newgate.' It may have been only the clock tower: but North did not want to lock the man up at all. Fox had a personal triumph. He compelled the Prime Minister to vote against his convictions and against his followers. North suffered the indignity of being beaten on his own motion, and having to be thankful for his beating. Whatever he might feel, there was no mistaking the sentiments of the King :

'Indeed that young man has so thoroughly cast off every principle of common honour and honesty that he must become as contemptible as he is odious.'

So George had written; and fearing lest his Minister's courage might still be wanting he pointedly added, 'Why don't you turn him out? You may if you will.' North rose to the occasion. Fox is said to have received a note which must have pleased his sense of humour. He was informed that the King had been moved to make out a new Commission of the Treasury and that in it Lord North failed to perceive his name. And so Fox was out; and out for good.

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Walpole was ready with another supply of scandal and gossip. The drift of this has been explained in connection with Burke's fortunes, and need not be repeated. Whether the public really scented mischief, or whether Walpole ran the trail alone, matters not. It is not our disposition to show Fox undue favour; but we can afford to leave him unmolested here.

APPENDIX

THE following letter was written by Lord North on the occasion of the contest between the Duke of Portland and Sir James Lowther, of which mention is made in Chapter III.

‘ My Lord,

‘ My time has been so taken up for these four days past that I have not had it in my power before now to acknowledge the honor of your Grace’s letter.

‘ If I remember right, I took my seat at the Board of Treasury on the 15 or 16 of Oct^r. last. What I am sure of is that it was not till after Mr. Cooper had been directed to write to your Grace, as I never had seen his letter till it came to me inclosed in yours of the 1st of this month.

‘ The first time that I was call’d upon to consider the question between your Grace and S^r James Lowther was upon the occasion of a complaint of your Grace’s agent that the Surveyor General had refused him the inspection of the King’s records in his possession. We sent to demand of the Surveyor Gen^l the reasons of this refusal. He reported, in answer, that he thought [it] neither precedent nor justifiable to permit the King’s title-deeds to be inspected by any person who intended to dispute his right. I own,

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I could not help thinking there was weight in what he said, and seeing no cause for delaying any longer our compliance with his former report, I join'd in the Warrant which directed the Lease to be made out in favour of S^r James.

‘ The Surveyor General is the Officer to whom, as Keeper of the King’s Title-deeds, Questions of this kind are usually refer’d. I had no doubt of the propriety of agreeing with his report, but upon some discourses I had at court with Mr. Yorke, I determined to look it over again before I permitted the Exchequer Seal to be affix’d to the Lease, that I might see whether there was a probable cause stated in it sufficient to justify the Treasury in granting the Lease. Upon this second view, I found the Surveyor’s opinion so full, clear and precise upon the question, that I had no pretence for withholding the Seal, which, as the case stood, would have been the more ridiculous and inconsistent, as I had myself signed the Treasury Warrant.

‘ I have taken the liberty to lay before your Grace the part that I have had in this transaction.

‘ As Chancellor of the Exchequer my share in this business was merely ministerial and is sufficiently justified by the order of the Treasury.

‘ As a Lord of the Treasury I consider that it was my duty, upon such a report from the Surveyor General, to endeavour, by the means that he advised, to recover the rights of the Crown, and I know of no engagement or promise which ought, in point of honour, to prevent my concurrence in this measure.

‘ Our decision in this case is not final. The Question of right is to be tried before another tribunal. I can venture to promise that, in the course of the trials, your Grace will not meet with any hard measure on the part of the Treasury, and

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that they will not deny you any fair advantage that they can give without betraying the interests of the Crown.

‘ I am, my Lord, with the greatest respect,
‘ Your Grace’s most obedient humble servant
‘ NORTH.¹

‘ *Downing Street,*
‘ *Jan. 7, 1768.*’

This refers to the lease of Inglewood Forest, which had been held by the Portland family for over sixty years. Lowther discovered a flaw in the original grant and claimed accordingly.

Whether North’s ‘share in the business was merely ministerial,’ or merely political, it remains that he supported Lowther and objected to the Nullum Tempus Bill. This measure, as it was passed, was not retrospective and did not safeguard the Duke. Lowther proceeded with his case ; but judgment was eventually given against him in the Court of Exchequer on technical grounds. Portland was left in possession, and sold his property to the Duke of Devonshire in 1787.

¹ Welbeck Abbey Papers : unpublished.

END OF VOL. I.







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